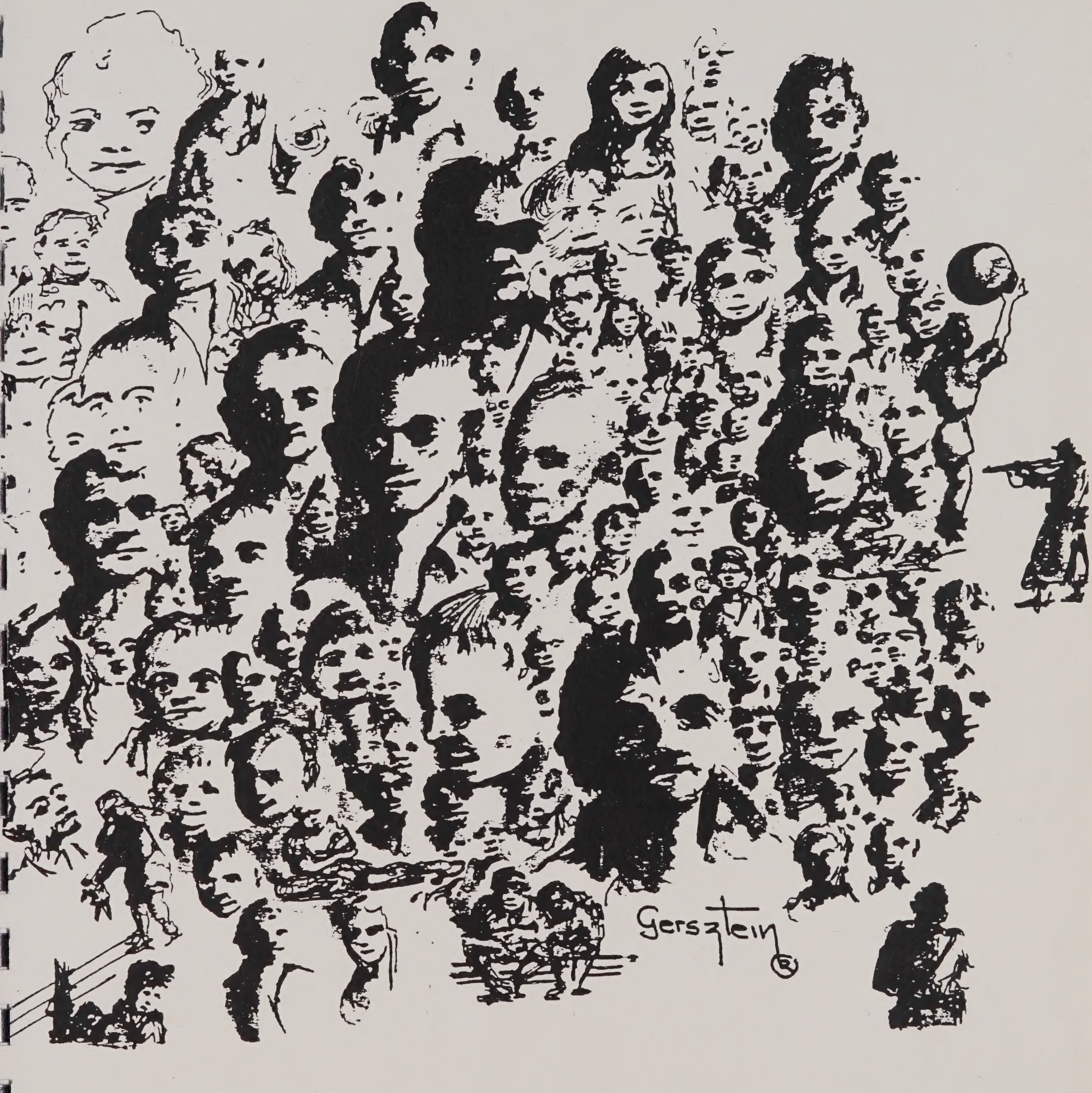
UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims
Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of such materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-479-9717 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.


Gersztein ®

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

https://archive.org/details/bib292133

MEMOIRS
of
SAMUEL ESTEROWICZ
in collaboration
with
PEARL ESTEROWICZ GOOD

memoirs translated from Russian
and edited by
Pearl Esterowicz Good

Acknowledgements

MY HEARTFELT THANKS TO

- My dear cousin, the late architect Gary Gersztein
- who, before his untimely death at the age of 55
- contributed his powerful drawing
- which serves as frontispiece here,
- as well as the diagram of the "maline",
- the hiding place in which we both survived
- the terrifying concluding days of the Nazi nightmare.

•

- My dear friend, Dora Wulc
- for help with the editing of the MEMOIRS
- My beloved daughter, Hannah (Anne) Good
- for help with editing and proofreading

•

- The Pomona College Chemistry Department:
- Dr. Wayne Steinmetz
- for help and encouragement
- DR. Freeman Allen
- for making it all possible
- Evelyn Jacoby
- for encouragement and help with typing

•

- The kind consultants of the Seaver Academic Computer Center
- for invaluable help with the printing of the MEMOIRS

•

- Gerhard Ott
- for reproducing the photographs from old originals

•

- Gratefully, Pearl Esterowicz Good

•

OUTLINE

SAMUEL ESTEROWICZ
1897 - 1985

Samuel "Munia" Esterowicz was born in Wilno, into the moderately well-to-do family of the lumber merchant Leiba Esterowicz. As was typical in the Jewish business community, his father strived to follow ethical business practices-a characteristic that his son would try to emulate for the rest of his life. Munia' childhood was a happy one. Looking back, he could see that, in spite of the threat of the rare pogroms, for Jews, life in Czarist Russia had been immeasurably better than what it would be for them later in the Soviet Union. The severe limitations of the Jewish "quotas" and of being forced to live in the "pale of settlements" was well tolerated. He was well acquainted with discrimination against Jews. Once as a teenager while trying to enroll at the university, Munia got stuck overnight in St. Petersburg where, as a Jew, he had no right to stay prior to being a student.

As a student in "Peter", Munia got acquainted with the nobility of spirit of the Russian students. In 1917 he was an enthusiastic supporter of the democratic revolution and then was a helpless witness to the takeover of power by the bolsheviks where he suffered from great hunger and near starvation. Munia abhorred the communist's cruelty; later, as an economist, he understood that the communism's inhumanity was dictated by its leadership's desire to retain power in spite of the system's inefficiency. As we see now, communism can not stay in power without brutal oppression - Samuel Esterowicz had perceived this half a century before.

After the 1918 armistice the Esterowicz family returned to Wilno which was then changing hands between the Soviets, Lithuanians and the Poles. To complete his education, Munia went to Berlin and enrolled at the Business School there; he graduated in 1924. Life in Germany during the time of the Weimar Republic was peaceful and orderly. Munia credits his German education with teaching him to discipline his thought and introduce reason into his life; it also acquainted him closely with the West European cultural heritage, its music and painting.

Returning to Wilno after graduation, Munia found the city in economic decline; its industries had lost markets cut off by hostile frontiers, and its most vigorous element, the Jewish business community, was being strangled by the antiSemitic credit policy of the Polish government. Almost ruined by the war and the business climate, Munia's loving father continued to support and help all his children. Munia and his brother David went to the forests of Lithuania to help their father in his lumber business. In the little village of Koltynyany Munia was struck by the beautiful, almost patriarchal relationship between the Jews and the Lithuanian peasants there. It was a horrible shock when not quite sixteen years later he learned that in June of 1941, without being ordered to by the Germans, those same peasants massacred all the Jews of Koltynyany, down to the smallest baby.

In 1926 Munia's father, Leiba Esterowicz, died of a heart attack at the age of sixty one. The death of his adored father shook Munia to his depths. He really missed then the support of the religious faith from which he had turned away in his youth. One year later Munia met Ida Gerstein; they got married in 1928, their only daughter, Perella was born in 1929.

It was very hard to make a living in Wilno, but after several difficult years Munia became a representative of Tungsram, a Hungarian electric bulb producer and soon acquired a new client. Elektryt's energetic Jewish owners were able to develop it from a modest repair shop into a large radio receiver manufacture - the biggest enterprise in Wilno. As Electryt's supplier, Munia's income rose dramatically. The example of his father's highly ethical business principles and his own kindness inspired Munia to be helpful to his other clients.

The Second World War found Samuel Esterowicz a successful businessman. After being first occupied by the Soviets, Wilno was handed over to Lithuania and the Wilno inhabitants could visit their neighbours for the first time. Samuel found the Lithuanian Jews much more prosperous than their Polish brethern, the government more benevolent. Life changed when the Soviets occuppied Lithuania in June of 1940. As a former businessman, Samuel was persecuted as a "Burzhuj", his business and bank accounts were nationalized, he was unable to get a job that might have protected him from deportation. Most of his apartment was taken by communist functionaries, he was on the brink of being deported when Nazi Germany attacked its former ally, Russia.

Wilno was occupied by the Germans after a couple of days. A few days later Samuel had a terrifying experience. A Lithuanian named Labanauskas who lived on the same landing probably was drunk and put on a light during blackout; when confronted by a passing patrol, he assured them that it was the Jew accross the way that was signaling to the Russians. Samuel was arrested - his life was saved when, miraculously, at the precinct, one of the Lithuanian patrolmen declared that the light was not in the Esterowicz window, but in that of Labanauskas.

The other life saving occurrence was the friendship of Boleslaw Poddany, a Polish owner of a car dealership and repairshop who was Samuel's customer and was impressed by Samuel's honest and helpful business practices. Under German occupation Poddany's repairshop was working for the German Army and could protect his employees. Poddany employed Samuel as stockroom manager, his certificate shielded Samuel from the "Khapuny" - the Lithuanian henchmen who snatched Jewish men and took them to Ponary to be shot - the husbands of his sisters Anya and Emma perished there.

After the Jews had been chased into the inhumanly crowded ghetto, the Germans wanted still more victims. Only those workers "indispensable to the war effort" would receive the yellow "permit to live" certificate for themselves and their wives and two small children. Samuel received this vital certificate from Poddany. His mother perished then. His sister Emma Eisurowicz had given her yellow "life permit" to her daughter Eva; thinking that the killings were taking place only in Lithuania, Samuel arranged with great difficulty to send his sisters Emma, Anya and niece Shela to Belorussia - the day after they arrived they were herded into the synagogue and burned. This was the most painful shock in Samuel's life.

Samuel's work in Poddany's repairshop, incorporated into "Army Vehicle Repair" H.K.P. saved him and his family from the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto in September of 1943. To protect his repair workers, a kind German Major named Plagge persuaded Berlin to let him keep them in a work camp - H.K.P. Even though it was subject to the S.S. and the killing of children, the camp enabled the Esterowicz family to survive until the liberation by the Red Army. They were saved from a final massacre during the hours before liberation by finding a hiding place (unfortunately Eva and her husband perished). After they escaped from camp a Lithuanian stranger offered them shelter during the German retreat.

In liberated Lithuanian S.S.R. Samuel Esterowicz worked in the Planning Ministry and had tragicomic problems with the Socialist Planning. Unwilling to live under communist rule, the Esterowicz family repatriated to Poland. Polish antiSemitism made them escape to Italy where Perella earned a doctor's degree in chemistry and Samuel worked for the American Joint as inspector of Refugee Camps, trying to protect the helpless refugees from thievery and exploitation.

The American Displaced Persons Bill enabled the Esterowicz family to move to New York where Samuel worked as an accountant. He had strong views about the inadequacies of the American educational system and the reason for the inability of the U.S. justice system to protect the innocent from the criminals.

Perella got married, had her first son in 1954 and moved to California in 1956, where she had a pair of twins, a girl and a boy. In 1974 she was finally able to persuade her parents to move to California. In 1975 Ida Esterowicz suffered a stroke and died six months later.

His daughter persuaded Samuel Esterowicz to record his immense store of memories in the form of an extensive memoir which he worked on during his later years. He died in 1985 at the age of 87.

Pearl Esterowicz Good
West Covina, California
July 15, 1992

WILNO	1
W.W. I	48
PETROGRAD	65
DOOMED MONARCHY	85
DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION	96
EVALUATION OF THE CAPITALIST & COMMUNIST ECONOMIES	120
BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION	108
RETURN TO WILNO	139
GERMANY	161
RETURN TO WILNO	178
SOVIET, GERMAN REALITY, "RED MENACE"	201
W.W. II	216
HITLERS ATTACK ON RUSSIA	234
THE HOLOCAUST	238
GHETTO	247-279
VOVA'S STORY	263
H.K.P.	295
LIBERATION	319
WILNO	321
POLAND	334
ITALY	338
UNITED STATES	352
PERELLA CONTINUES the FAMILY HISTORY	362
APPENDIX. Letters and thoughts.	APPENDIX letters

WILNO 1

History of Wilno
Family life
Russian history
Position of Jews in Russia
Comparison with life in the U.S.
Family life, description of family members
Father's business
Beylis affair
Russian intelligentsia
Similarity of Okhrana and Stalin
Twilight of the Czarist regime
Tolstoy

WORLD WAR I 48

International politics, prelude to war
The policies of England, Germany and Russia
Sarajevo tragedy
Roots of tragedy, the Balkan war, Berlin Congress
Oppression of Serbs
Premeditated war plans of Austria and Germany
W.W. I breaks out

Petrograd

My departure for Petrograd
Illegal stay as Jew in Petrograd
Chance of enrolling at the Petrograd University
Petrograd
Innocent abroad
Family settles in Gomel after being endangered at the front
Nobility of spirit of the Russian students
False prophecy of socialism
Description of the university and of my life
Russian unpreparedness
Russian politics
Petrograd Jews
Historical overview of situation
Cultural life, library, theater, opera
Young romances
Russian military fronts 1915-1916
Jewish students
Rasputin
Sister Emma's family
My life in Petrograd, studies
Western front
Eastern front

DOOMED MONARCHY 85

My visit to Gomel
Description of family life
Anxiety about draft-age sons
Financial difficulties, looking for work
Taking post of clerk at the remote Obukhovsky factory
Observation of the character of the Russian worker
Inflation, shortages
Government corruption (Rasputin)
Cadet party, Milyukov's speech
The Czarist couple's blindness
Protests, strikes
Demonstrations on Znamenskaya square
Experience with Cossack

DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION 96

Events of February, March of 1917
Collapse of autocracy - absence of police
Burning police station, district court
Confused shooting
Exultation, street experiences
Governmental Duma assumes authority
Moderates attempts to avoid shocks fatal for the war effort
Abdication of the Czar on March 2nd, 1917
Formation of Provisional Government
Two authorities - Duma and Soviet
Joyful enthusiasm
Problems of Provisional Government
Milyukov and Kerensky
Revolution eventually brought military defeat and bolshevism
Lenin engendered Hitler
Milyukov ignored the demoralization of army
Kerensky proposes "peace without annexations"
Germany rejects peace offer, injects Lenin into Russia
The figure of Kerensky
Genghis Khan and Peter the Great
Chats on Znamenskaya square
Revolutionary Democrats irreparable mistakes
Suppression of Kornilov's attempt at military dictatorship

BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION 108

Deadly role of the bolsheviks
Ludendorf's crafty injection of Lenin to liquidate the second front
Lenin's perfidious demagoguery
I heard Lenin's speech
Bolshevik's horrible deeds in contrast to their promises
Troops of the Petrograd garrison organized by Trotsky
End of my deferment, I want to defend democratic Russia
Father engineers deferment
Work at the Mamontov's
October Bolshevik revolution
Kerensky gets little help from military
Bolshevik's supposed "pacifism"

Hunger in Petrograd in the months after the Bolshevik overthrow
Dictatorship - Lenin takes off mask
Forcible disbanding of the Constituent Assembly
Shameful Brest-Litovsk peace conditions
Victory of the Allies saved the communist state
Vlasov's treason of 1941 equivalent to Lenin's treason of 1917
Evaluation of capitalist and communist economies
The indispensable free market price
Terrible price in suffering of the failure of communist economy
Soviet mockery of truth
Lenin the greatest evil genius of this century
Events in the country after the forcible disbanding of the Assembly
Trotsky organizes the Red Army
David's and my lives in Petrograd
Terrible hunger
My exams at the university
Leaving Petrograd for Gomel
Peaceful life in the Ukraine under German occupation
German defeat, capitulation
Terrible pogroms after German withdrawal

GERMANY 161

In defeated Germany, thoughts of retaliation
Reactionary lie that war was lost because of Jews and Marxists
The Nazi Hitler gang
Assassination of Walter Rathenau caused by Rapallo
Rapallo the first correct step in German politics
Rapallo's results excellent for Germany
My enrollment at the Commercial Institute in Berlin
My subjects and professors
Ricardo's quantitative theory of value of money
Berlin a world center of science and art
The terrible devaluation of the mark
Old traditions untouched, depersonalization by industrialization
I feel no antisemitism
Great Jewish input to the growth of German banking and industry
Jewish participation in German banks, industry, department stores
Jewish contribution to science and literature
Moscow emigree theater
Russian circles in Berlin
Broadening of my cultural horizons

RETURN TO WILNO 178

Family financial difficulties
Polish economic antisemitism
The ruin of many enterprises
Jews the only enterprising element
Wilno's economic decline
Creative and beneficial role of the Jews
Jewish successs and inventiveness were the Jewish "crime"
Description of "big" Kola
I start work at the Shenyuk sawmill

Pilsudski takes over power
Death of beloved father - the fallacy of atheism
I meet my future wife, Ida Gerstein, we get married
Initial success in business, luxurious apartment
The idle lives of wives of our generation
Birth of our daughter Perella
Death of my father-in-law
I take over franchises, modest income, I curtail expenses
My income increases sharply because of Electryt
Steadfast business principles contributed to our survival
Description of my friend Alesha and family

THE SOVIET, GERMAN REALITY 201
"The Red Menace"

Collectivization, life ever more intolerable
Scapegoats for failures
Business support of Hitler because of "Red Menace"
Ill fated mistake of democratic Czechoslovakia
Antisemitism in Poland strengthened by Hitler's example
Poland's suicidal foreign policy
False conviction that empires were indispensable for prosperity
Prosperity and abandonment of "laissez faire" (Keynes)
Happy marriage, prosperity
Perella's early developement
Our move to better premises on Zawalna 2
Summer vacations in Niemenczyn
Month in Paris at the International Exposition
David's difficulties there
Anya and Yefim's difficulties
Circumstances of the Gerstein family
My wife's illness
Gera's illness and death
Evaluation of Chamberlain's Munich "appeasement"
Hitler occupies Czechoslovakia
England guarantees Poland's borders (and therefore Russia's)
Soviet pact with Hitler

WORLD WAR II breaks out 216

Hitler attacks Poland
Wilno is bombed
Soviet tank crashes across the street from our house.
Wilno is occupied by the Soviets, arrest of many people
Great difference in Russian people
Wilno is handed over to democratic Lithuania
Jewish refugees stream into Wilno
Description of Lithuania
Stalin realizes his mistake
Occupation of Lithuania by the Soviets
Arrests and deportations
I am sure that Hitler would attack Russia immediately

HITLER'S ATTACK ON RUSSIA 234

Stalin refuses to believe
Hitler's victorious Balkan operation main reason for his downfall
June 22, 1941 Hitler's attack on Russia
Frenzied Soviet evacuation
Poddany's offer of help
Germans occupy Wilno

THE HOLOCAUST 238

Anti-Jewish measures
Mass murder begins with the grabbing of men (Khapuny)
Did we behave like "sheep to the slaughter"? No!
The German's diabolical plan for our extermination
My horrifying arrest
Provokatzye
We are driven into the ghetto
Unspeakably crowded conditions in the ghetto
Perella is taken to the infectious barrack with scarlet fever
The Yom Kippur aktzye
Pole's joy at the killing of Jews
Why antisemitism?
A decent German
The role of the ghetto chief Gens
The aktzye of "yellow life certificates"
Emma gives her "life certificate" to Eva
The night before the slaughter
The murder of our families
Killing of the second ghetto
German need of a work-force

MY SON-IN-LAW VOVA GDUD'S STORY 263

Attempted flight to Russia
Being shot at Ponary - miraculous survival
Warning of another execution
Running away from being shot by a Lithuanian "friend"

Father's escape from execution
Death of my mother and younger brother
Excruciating years of hiding
Kind drunkard savior
Father's generosity
Terrifyingly close to detection (death) experiences
Attempted sabotage of railroad, escape after being caught
Near encounter with deadly Polish "White Partisans"
Inability to kill a captured Lithuanian policeman

H.K.P. 295

We move to the work-camp H.K.P. on Sept. 16, 1943
We learn about the liquidation of the ghetto on Sept. 23rd, 1943
Mula Gerstein and family end miraculously in Kailis
Ida manages to bring the Gersteins to H.K.P.
Ida & Perella work in workshops
Perella's memories of barely escaping aktzye grabbing women
Major Plagge's kindness
Life in H.K.P., vital importance of books
The children's performance
The children aktzye on the day after
Perella finds Zmigrod's maline, hides there during children aktzye
The fate of Mosya Cholem and family
Feverish work to finish building Zmigrod's maline
Major Plagge's warning
We descend into the maline on July 23rd, 1943
Experiences in the maline
Coming out during German retreat

LIBERATION, JULY 1944 319
Wilno

Life in liberated Wilno under the Soviets
Stalin's antisemitism
Tales of the partisans
Ida's illness
Perella finds a tutor, is able to rejoin highschool grade
My work in the Soviet Lithunia's Planning Ministry
The reality of life in the "classless paradise"
Arrests and deportations
My views on the conduct of the war
We leave Wilno for Poland on a freight train

Poland 1945-1946 334

We settle in Lodz
Perella goes to the Lyceum, graduates
Not much chance of coexistance of Jews and Gentiles
Polish pogroms
We leave Poland illegally for Italy

ITALY 1946-1951 338

Problems of refugee life in Milan
Difficulties of making a living
Perella enrolls at the University
The Turin student hostel, "Casa dello studente"
My work for the Joint, transfer to Rome
Visit to Israel
Perella graduates
We leave Italy for the U.S.

UNITED STATES 352

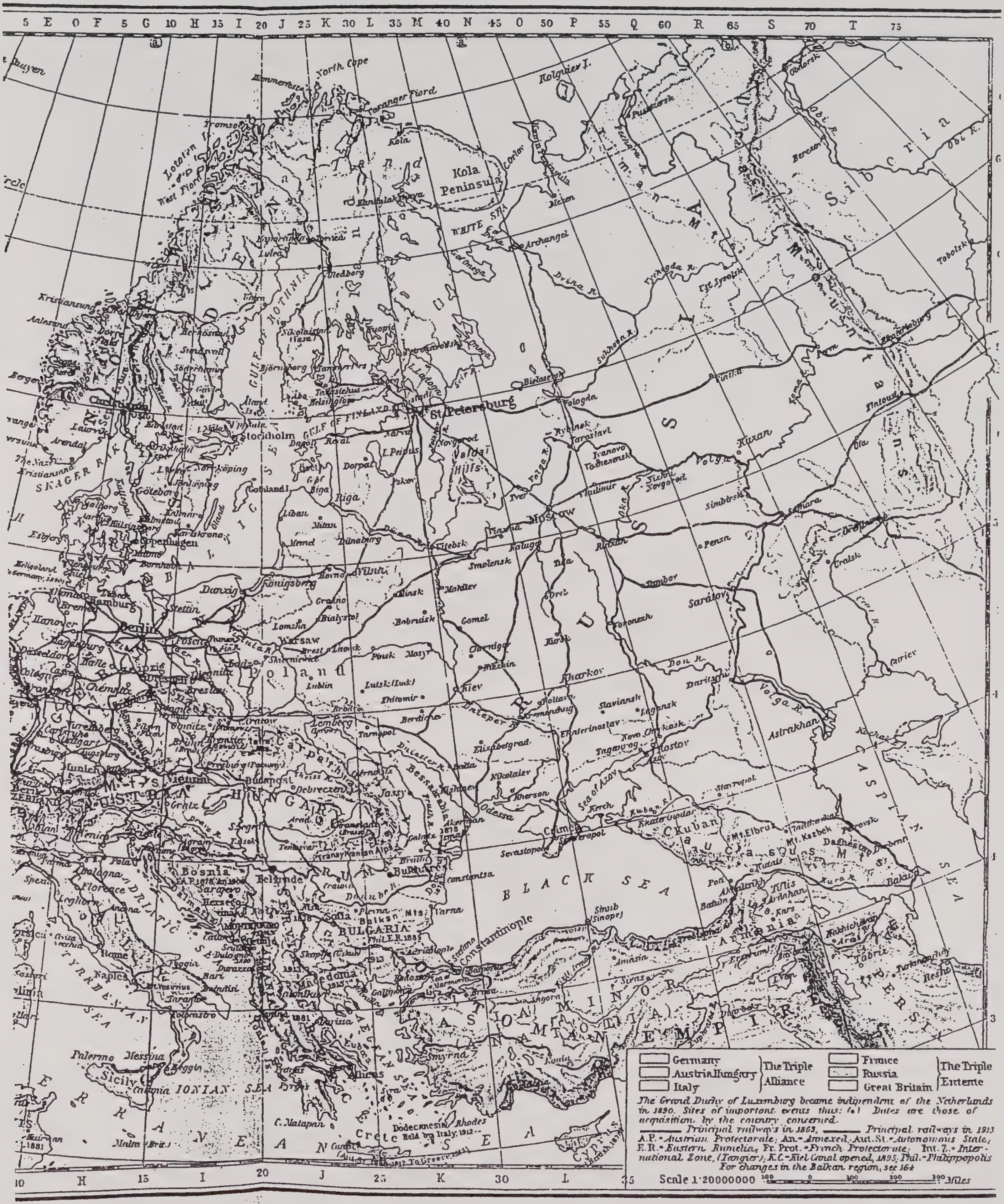
Mean employer
Perella's and Vova's wedding
My work for Helen Neushafer
Impressions of American education, politics
Our life in New York, "United Wilno"
Birth of grandson Lenny in 1954
Perella, Vova and Lenny go to California

Perella continues the family history. 362

Our first California experience.
We decide to move to CA.
Sadness of separation.
Journey to CA.
We leave Lenny with my parents.
Establishing the office.
My work at the office.
My Mother brings Lenny to us.
Father's stock investments.
Birth of Anne and Michael.
Lenny resents the twins.
Vova's father, Rabbi Gdud and his wife Gita come to CA.
We build the house of our dreams.
I begin working at Pomona College.
Mike's reading.
Getting rid of the TV.
Anne's horses.
Israel's six day war in 1967.
Our visit to Israel.
My Israel Ulpan experience with the children in youth camps.
Lenny's Bar Mitzvah.
Rabbi Gdud's death in 1968.
The kids go to youth camps in Israel, we to Israel and Greece.
Lenny goes to Pomona College in 1971.
My parents move to CA in 1974.
Lenny gets admitted to Albert Einstein Medical School.
My mother's stroke.
Father begins the writing of his memoirs.
Anne gets admitted to Pitzer, Mike to U. of Redlands, then Occidental.
Mike gets the role of Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof.
Mother dies in July of 1975.
Mike gets thrown into jail in Mexico.

Mike decides to be a pre-med.
Father takes Anne to Russia in 1978.
Father's letter about the economy.
Father's letters to Nixon, Nixon's reply.
Lenny graduates from Einstein Medical School.
Mike is admitted to the Rochester Medical School.
Lenny starts pediatric residency in New York.
Father's prostatectomy.
Lenny marries Stacy in 1981.
Father begins new investment strategy.
Father and I go to the Soviet Union, Wilno, Berlin in 1982.
Birth of Lenny's and Stacy's son Benjamin in 1982.
Father advises me on investments.
Father's metastatic cancer.
Mike graduates from Rochester Medical School in 1983.
Mike marries Sue in 1983.
Birth of Mike's and Sue's son Jonathan in 1984.
Father continues his interrupted memoirs in collaboration with me.
Anne goes to Ross U. Veterinary School in St. Kitts.
My Father dies in Jan. 1985.
Eulogies.
Our trip to Israel, Italy.
I start the translation of my father's memoirs.
My breast cancer is discovered in Feb. 1986, chemotherapy started.
Lenny's and Stacy's son Jesse is born in October 1986.
Mike's and Sue's daughter Rebecca is born in March 1987.
Vova and I go to the Soviet Union, Wilno, visit the
peasants who saved him during the Nazis.
We visit Vovka's uncle Mula and his family in Argentina in Oct. 1987.
Our Alaska cruise.
We go to New York for Anne' graduation from Veterinary School.

Europe, 1871—1914.


North Cape
Hammerfest
Varanger Fiord
Kolguiev I.
Tromsö
Lofoten Is.
West Fiord
Kola
Kola Peninsula
Kandalaksha
WHITE SEA
Archangel
Onega
Mezen
Pustozersk
Obdorsk
Obi R.
Berezov
Siberia
Tobolsk
Dvina R.
Ust Sysolsk
Ural Mountains
Ekaterinburg
Perm
Vyatka
Zlatoust
Ufa
Uleåborg
GULF OF BOTHNIA
Luleå
Kristiansund
Trondhjem
Aalesund
Bergen
Christiania
Stockholm
Uppsala
Åland Is.
Helsingfors
Åbo
Viborg
Kuopio
Petrozavodsk
L. Ladoga
L. Onega
Bielozersk
Vologda
St. Petersburg
GULF OF FINLAND
Reval
Narva
Novgorod
L. Peipus
Dorpat
Pskov
Valdai Hills
Rybinsk
Yaroslavl
Ivanovo
Kostroma
Kazan
Volga R.
Nizhni Novgorod
Vladimir
Tver
Moscow
Riga
Gotland I.
Libau
Mitau
Dünaburg
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Kaluga
Tula
Riazan
Penza
Simbirsk
Samara
Orenburg
Uralsk
Saratov
Tambov
Voronezh
Orel
Kursk
Kharkov
Don R.
Tsaritsyn
Astrakhan
Vilna
Kovno
Minsk
Mohilev
Gomel
Bobruisk
Chernigov
Kiev
Pinsk
Mozyr
Lutsk
Zhitomir
Berdichev
Dnieper R.
Poltava
Kremenchug
Ekaterinoslav
Slaviansk
Lugansk
Taganrog
Rostov
Novo Cherkask
Stavropol
Elizabetgrad
Nikolaiev
Kherson
Odessa
Akerman
Kishinev
Bessarabia
Sea of Azov
Crimea
Sevastopol
Kerch
Kuban
Ekaterinodar
Caucasus Mts.
Mt. Elbrus
Mt. Kazbek
Tiflis
Batum
Kars
Ardahan
Erivan
Baku
Derbent
Petrovsk
Daghestan
CASPIAN SEA
Persia
Tabriz
Resht
Armenia
Erzerum
Trebizond
Samsun
Sinub (Sinope)
Angora
ASIA MINOR
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Smyrna
Konia
Cyprus
Rhodes
Dodecanesia Held by Italy, 1912
Crete
C. Matapan
BLACK SEA
Constantinople
Varna
Constantsa
Bucharest
Rumania
Jassy
Galatz
Braila
Kronstadt
Transylvanian Alps
Bulgaria
Sofia
Plevna
Balkan Mts.
Philippopolis
E.R. 1885
Adrianople
Salonika
Macedonia
Skoplje (Üsküb)
Albania
Durazzo
Montenegro
Cetinje
Serbia
Belgrade
Bosnia
A.P. 1878 An. 1908
Sarajevo
Herzegovina
Dalmatia
ADRIATIC SEA
Greece
Athens
Larissa
Patras
AEGEAN SEA
IONIAN SEA
Italy
Rome
Naples
Mt. Vesuvius
Bari
Brindisi
Taranto
Messina
Reggio
Palermo
Sicily
Catania
Malta (Brit.)
Tyrrhenian Sea
Sardinia
Corsica
Spezia
Florence
Bologna
Leghorn
Ancona
Venice
Trieste
Fiume
Agram
Pola
Gratz
Vienna
Pressburg
Budapest
Hungary
Debreczen
Arad
Szegedin
Temesvar
Carpathian Mts.
Lemberg
Tarnopol
Cracow
Przemysl
Brody
Austria
Munich
Augsburg
Stuttgart
Carlsruhe
Strassburg
Nuremberg
Prague
Brünn
Olmütz
Breslau
Dresden
Leipzig
Chemnitz
Halle
Cassel
Frankfurt
Cologne
Düsseldorf
Magdeburg
Hanover
Bremen
Hamburg
Altona
Kiel
Heligoland
Berlin
Stettin
Posen
Danzig
Königsberg
Thorn
Lodz
Warsaw
Brest Litovsk
Lublin
Poland
Lomzha
Grodno
Bialystok
Copenhagen
Bornholm
Esbjerg
Aalborg
Denmark
Göteborg
Malmö
Karlskrona
Kalmar
Norrköping
Jönköping
Öland
Baltic Sea
SKAGER RAK
Kristiansand
Arendal
The Naze
Sweden
Norway
Finland
Lapland
Russia

Germany
Austria Hungary
Italy
The Triple Alliance
France
Russia
Great Britain
The Triple Entente

The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg became independent of the Netherlands in 1890. Sites of important events thus: (•) Dates are those of acquisition by the country concerned.

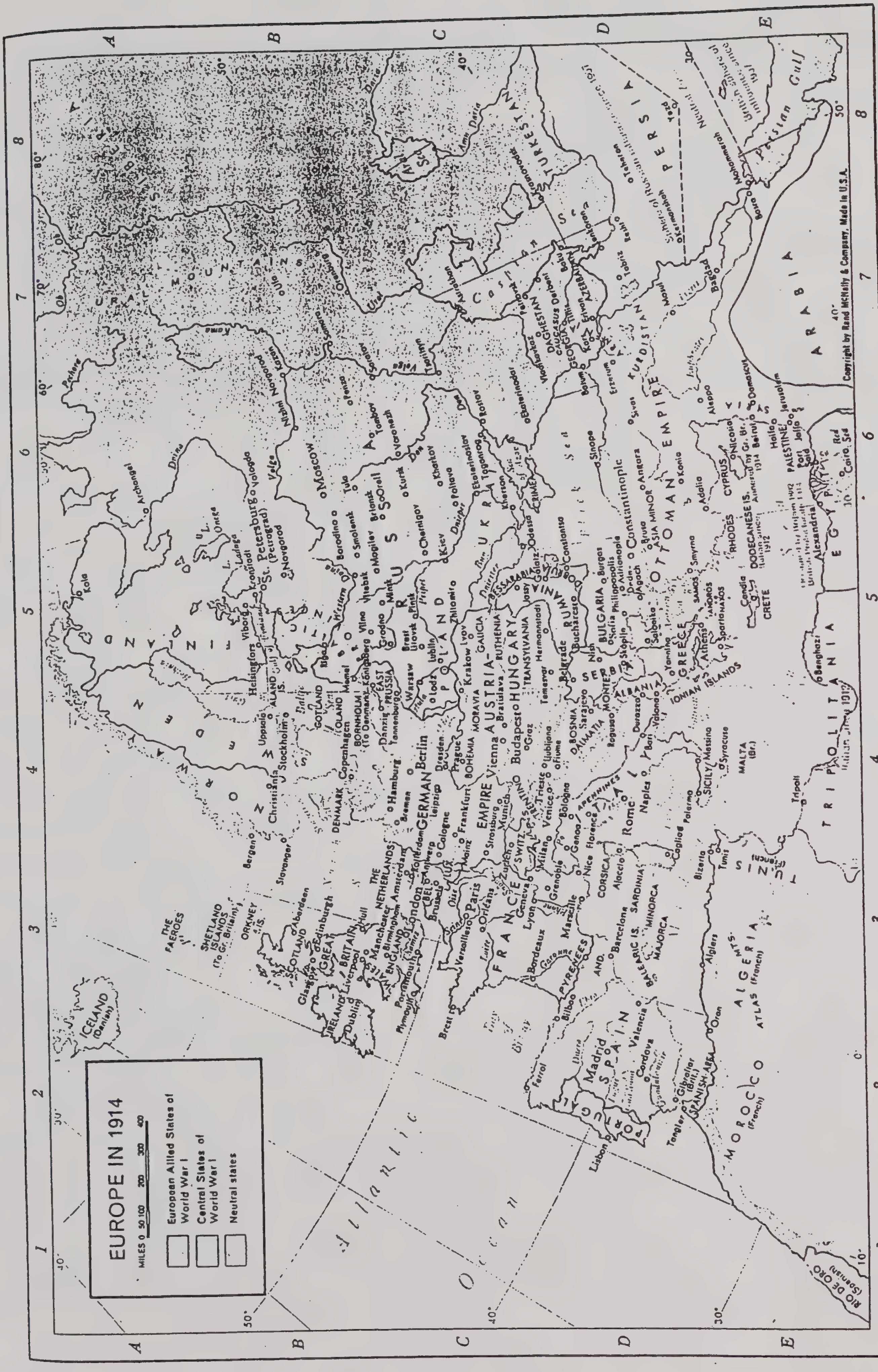
Principal railways in 1863, *Principal railways in 1913*

A.P. = *Austrian Protectorate;* An. = *Annexed;* Aut. St. = *Autonomous State;* E.R. = *Eastern Rumelia;* Fr. Prot. = *French Protectorate;* Int. Z. = *International Zone (Tangier);* K.C. = *Kiel Canal opened, 1895;* Phil. = *Philippopolis*

For changes in the Balkan region, see 164

Scale 1:20000000

100 0 100 200 300 Miles

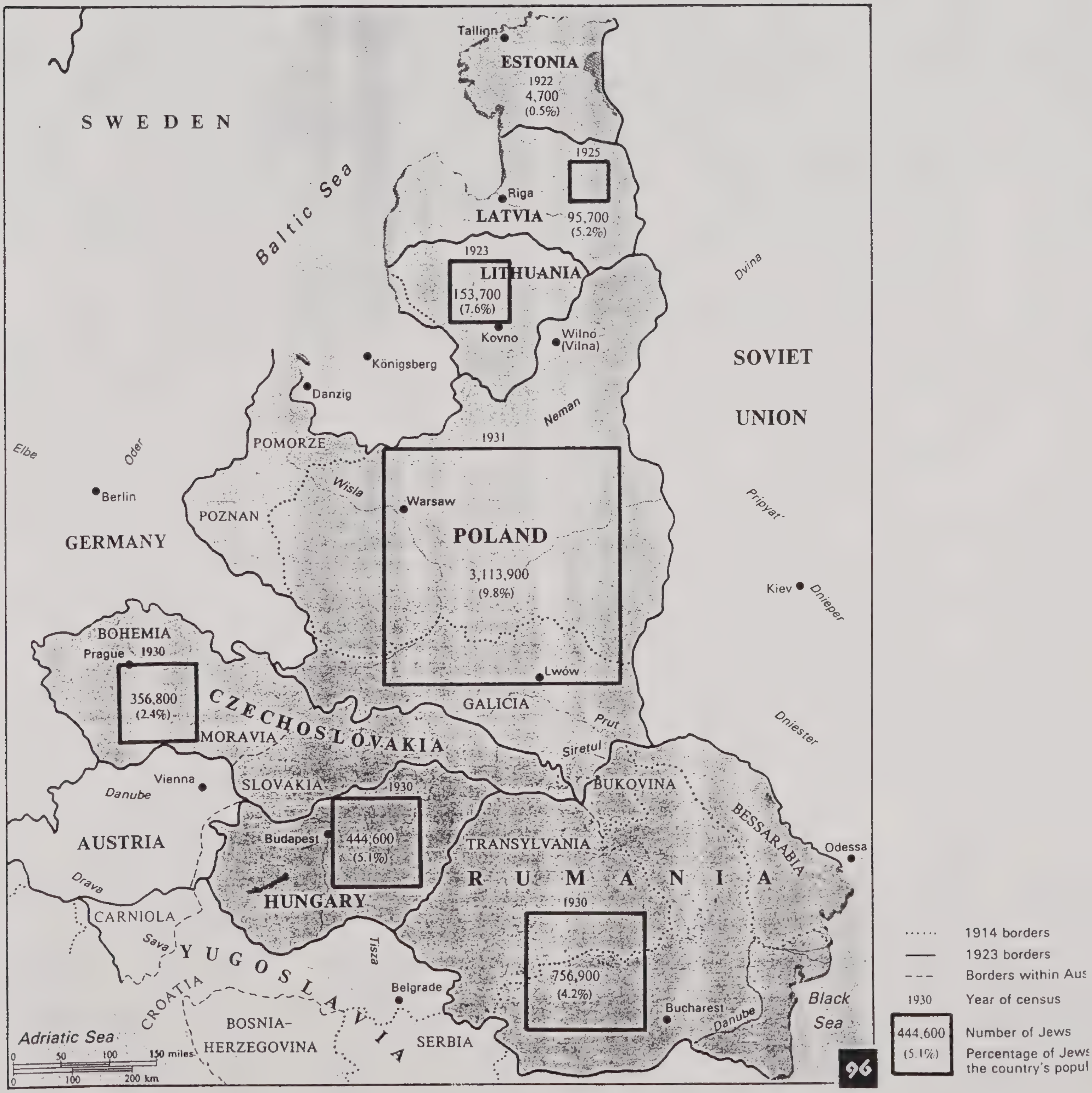

EUROPE IN 1914
MILES 0 50 100 200 300 400
European Allied States of World War I
Central States of World War I
Neutral states
Copyright by Rand McNally & Company, Made in U.S.A.
Atlantic Ocean
ICELAND (Danish)
THE FAEROES
SHETLAND ISLANDS (To Gr. Britain)
ORKNEY IS.
GREAT BRITAIN
IRELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
DENMARK
THE NETHERLANDS
BEL.
LUX.
GERMAN EMPIRE
EAST PRUSSIA
FRANCE
SWITZ.
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
BOHEMIA
MORAVIA
GALICIA
TRANSYLVANIA
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
ITALY
CORSICA
SARDINIA
SICILY
MALTA (Br.)
SERBIA
MONTENEGRO
ALBANIA
BOSNIA
GREECE
BULGARIA
RUMANIA
BESSARABIA
RUSSIA
POLAND
UKRAINE
CRIMEA
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
ASIA MINOR
KURDISTAN
CYPRUS
RHODES
DODECANESE IS.
CRETE
PALESTINE
EGYPT
TRIPOLITANIA
TUNIS
ALGERIA (French)
MOROCCO (French)
SPANISH AREA
RIO DE ORO (Spanish)
ARABIA
PERSIA
Persian Gulf
TURKESTAN
CAUCASUS
GEORGIA
DAGHESTAN
Caspian Sea
Black Sea
URAL MOUNTAINS
SIBERIA
Aral Sea
Mediterranean Sea
London
Paris
Berlin
Vienna
Budapest
Rome
Madrid
Moscow
St. Petersburg (Petrograd)
Constantinople
Warsaw
Sarajevo
Belgrade
Bucharest
Athens
Copenhagen
Stockholm
Christiania
Helsingfors
A B C D E
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

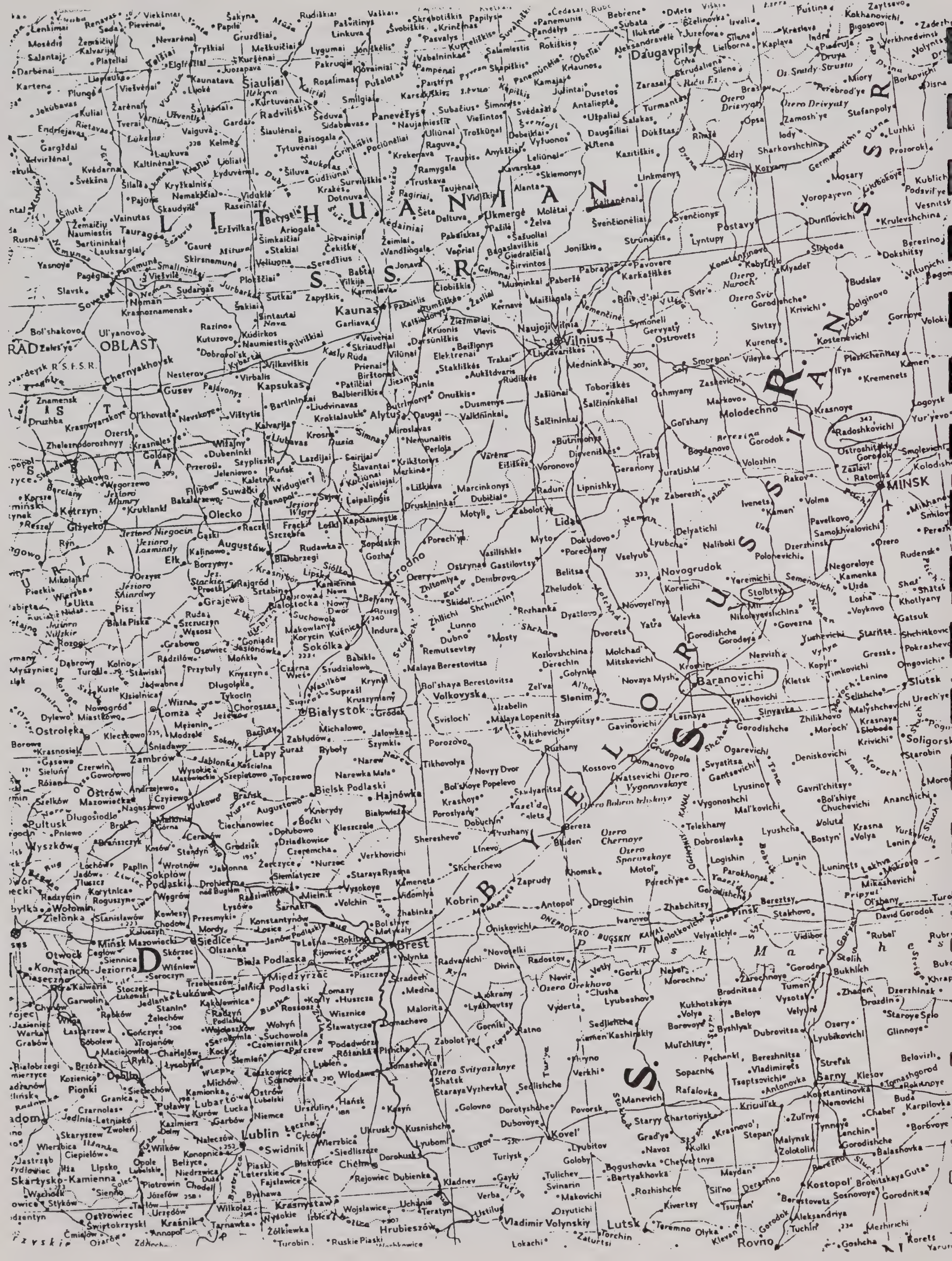
The Jews in East Central Europe in the Interwar Years

Eastern Europe underwent far-reaching political changes in the wake of World War I. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved, and the considerably reduced Austrian state (whose Jewish population was concentrated in the capital, Vienna) belonged culturally to Western Europe. Large parts of the former Russian Empire became independent countries.

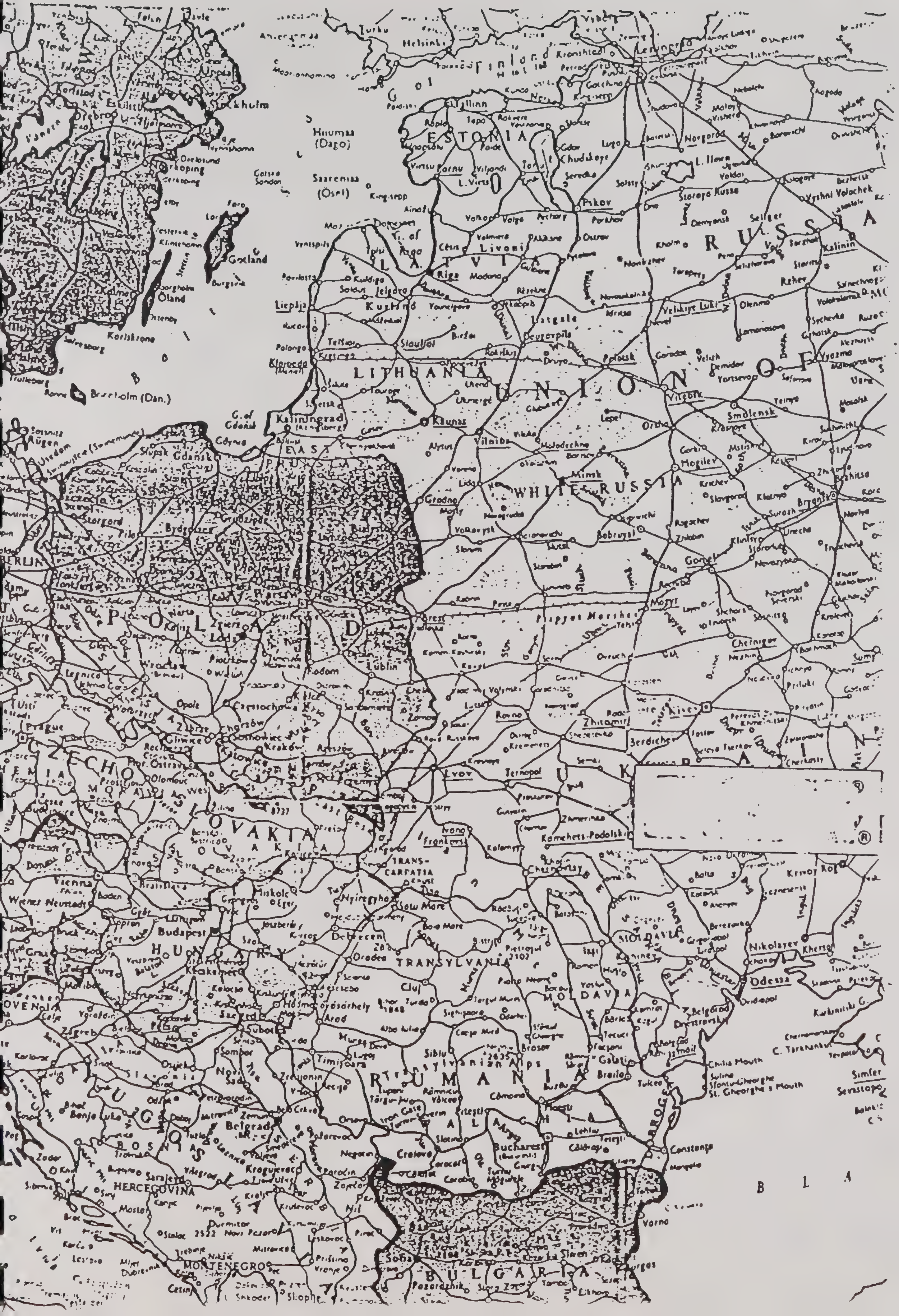
About 8 million Jews, half of the Jewish people, lived in Eastern Europe in the interwar period. Politically, they were divided into two groups: one in the Soviet Union, and the other in East Central Europe. The large Jewish group in the Soviet Union found itself in conditions very different from those of other European Jewries, as a result of the Russian Revolution. In the southern part of East Central Europe (the Balkans), several Jewish communities bore the mark of their particular history, influenced by the former Turkish presence in part of the region and by their unique ethnic composition, including Sephardim.

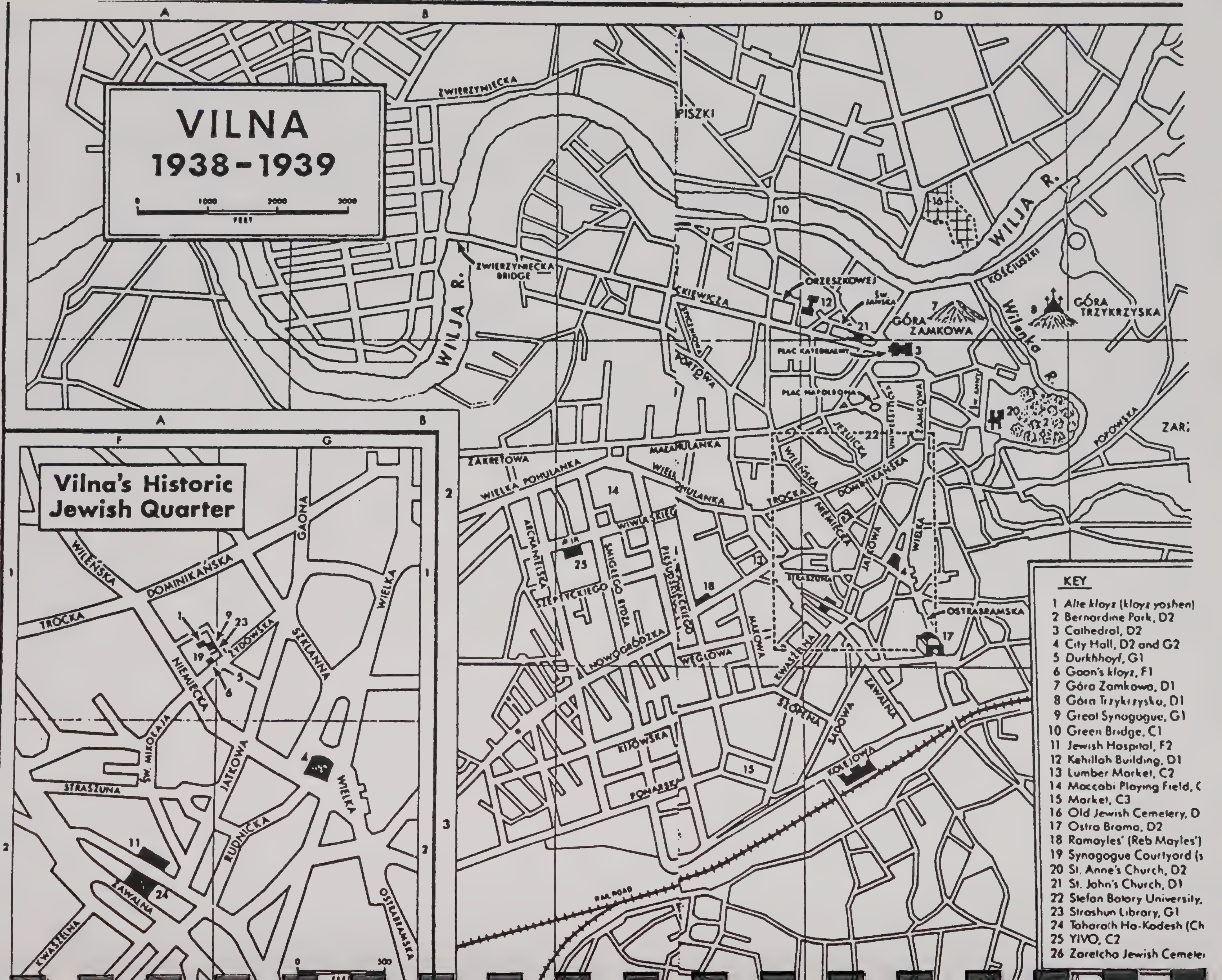
About 5 million Jews lived in seven countries of East Central Europe, from Estonia in the north to Rumania in the south. Most of those countries became politically independent after W gained territory (Rumania) or lost it (Hungary). The Jew Europe were one of the most vital segments of the Jewi well-established religious and cultural traditions, social that distinguished them from the general populations, a level of Jewish consciousness. In most countries (the r being Czechoslovakia), relations between Jews and r not good, and they deteriorated in the 1930s. This continuation of former tensions. In addition, political most of the new states were unstable, and the econ was difficult. Many new states contained large natio including Jews, who did not live peacefully either with with the majority group. The influence of the Nazi regi beginning in 1933 exacerbated the already deteriorati the Jews in almost all the East Central European c development of East Central European Jewry had a tra presaging the impending disaster of World War II.


Tallinn
ESTONIA
1922
4,700
(0.5%)
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
1925
Riga
LATVIA
95,700
(5.2%)
1923
LITHUANIA
153,700
(7.6%)
Kovno
Wilno (Vilna)
Dvina
Königsberg
Danzig
SOVIET UNION
Neman
1931
POMORZE
Elbe
Oder
Wisla
Berlin
Warsaw
POZNAN
Pripyat
GERMANY
POLAND
3,113,900
(9.8%)
Kiev
Dnieper
BOHEMIA
Prague
1930
Lwów
356,800
(2.4%)
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
GALICIA
Prut
Dniester
MORAVIA
Siretul
Vienna
SLOVAKIA
1930
BUKOVINA
Danube
BESSARABIA
AUSTRIA
Budapest
444,600
(5.1%)
TRANSYLVANIA
Odessa
Drava
RUMANIA
HUNGARY
1930
CARNIOLA
Sava
YUGOSLAVIA
Tisza
756,900
(4.2%)
CROATIA
Belgrade
Black Sea
Bucharest
Danube
Adriatic Sea
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
SERBIA
0 50 100 150 miles
0 100 200 km
1914 borders
1923 borders
Borders within Aus
1930 Year of census
444,600 (5.1%)
Number of Jews
Percentage of Jews the country's popul


LITHUANIAN S.S.R.
BYELORUSSIAN S.S.R.
OBLAST
R.S.F.S.R.
Vilnius
Kaunas
Šiauliai
Panevėžys
Daugavpils
Grodno
Minsk
Baranovichi
Radoshkovichi
Stolbtsy
Molodechno
Lida
Novogrudok
Slonim
Volkovysk
Białystok
Brest
Kobrin
Pinsk
Kovel'
Lutsk
Rovno
Sarny
Lublin
Siedlce
Chernyakhovsk
Gusev
Suwałki
Augustów
Ełk
Łomża
Ostrołęka
Zambrów
Sokółka
Bielsk Podlaski
Hajnówka
Biała Podlaska
Międzyrzec Podlaski
Łuków
Puławy
Dęblin
Chełm
Hrubieszów
Krasnystaw
Włodawa
Vladimir Volynskiy
Pultusk
Wyszków
Otwock
Kėdainiai
Ukmergė
Utena
Alytus
Druskininkai
Marijampolė
Kapsukas
Sovetsk
Tauragė
Raseiniai
Smorgon'
Oshmyany
Postavy
Vileyka
Slutsk
Soligorsk
Luninets
Pripyat'
Dnieprovsko-Bugskiy Kanal
Pinskie Bołota

East Central Europe in 1945


Helsinki
Turku
Finland
Leningrad
Vyborg
Kronshtadt
Stockholm
Gotland
Öland
Karlskrona
Bornholm (Dan.)
G. of Riga
Hiumaa (Dago)
Saaremaa (Ösel)
Tallinn
ESTONIA
Pärnu
Narva
Pskov
Novgorod
L. Ilmen
Vyshni Volochek
Kalinin
RUSSIA
Riga
LATVIA
Liepaja
Daugavpils
Velikiye Luki
Rzhev
Vyazma
LITHUANIA
Klaipeda
Kaunas
Vilnius
Kaliningrad
G. of Gdańsk
Gdańsk
EAST PRUSSIA
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Smolensk
UNION OF
Orsha
Mogilev
Minsk
WHITE RUSSIA
Grodno
Bobruysk
Gomel
Bryansk
BERLIN
Szczecin
Bydgoszcz
Poznań
Warsaw
POLAND
Łódź
Radom
Lublin
Brest
Pripyat Marshes
Mozyr
Chernigov
Wrocław
Opole
Częstochowa
Kraków
Katowice
Gliwice
Zhitomir
Kiev
Rovno
Lvov
Ternopol
Berdichev
UKRAINE
Prague
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Olomouc
Mor. Ostrava
Stanislav
TRANS-CARPATHIA
Kamenets-Podolski
Chernovtsy
Krivoy Rog
Vienna
Wiener Neustadt
Bratislava
Miskolc
Budapest
HUNGARY
Debrecen
Nyiregyháza
Satu Mare
Oradea
Cluj
TRANSYLVANIA
MOLDAVIA
Iaşi
Kishinev
Nikolayev
Kherson
Odessa
Belgorod Dnestrovski
Izmail
Galaţi
Brăila
Chilia Mouth
Sulina
St. Gheorghe's Mouth
Sevastopol
Simferopol
Arad
Timişoara
Sibiu
Transylvanian Alps
Braşov
RUMANIA
WALACHIA
Bucharest
Craiova
Constanţa
DOBRUJA
Zagreb
SLOVENIA
Osijek
Novi Sad
Belgrad
YUGOSLAVIA
BOSNIA
Banja Luka
Sarajevo
HERCEGOVINA
Mostar
SERBIA
Niš
Kragujevac
MONTENEGRO
Cetinje
Skoplje
Sofia
BULGARIA
Varna
Burgas
Plovdiv
Stara Zagora
Pazardzhik
B L A


VILNA
1938-1939
0
1000
2000
3000
FEET
Vilna's Historic Jewish Quarter
A
B
D
F
G
1
2
3
WILJA R.
Wilenka R.
ZWIERZYNIECKA
ZWIERZYNIECKA BRIDGE
PISZKI
ORZESZKOWEJ
ŚW. JAŃSKA
GÓRA ZAMKOWA
GÓRA TRZYKRZYSKA
KOŚCIUSZKI
PLAC KATEDRALNY
PLAC NAPOLEONA
UNIWERSYTECKA
ZAMKOWA
ŚW. ANNY
JEZUICKA
MAŁA POHULANKA
WIELKA POHULANKA
ZAKRETOWA
WILEŃSKA
DOMINIKAŃSKA
TROCKA
NIEMIECKA
JATKOWA
WIELKA
OSTRABRAMSKA
STRASZUNA
KWASZELNA
ZAWALNA
SZOPENA
SADOWA
KOLEJOWA
POPOWSKA
ZAR
ARCHANIELSKA
SZEPTYCKIEGO
ŚMIGŁEGO RYDZA
PIŁSUDSKIEGO
WIWULSKIEGO
NOWOGRÓDZKA
WĘGLOWA
MAKOWA
KIJOWSKA
PONARSKA
PORTOWA
RAILROAD
GAONA
SZKLANNA
ŻYDOWSKA
ŚW. MIKOŁAJA
RUDNICKA
0
500
KEY
1 Alte kloyz (kloyz yoshen)
2 Bernardine Park, D2
3 Cathedral, D2
4 City Hall, D2 and G2
5 Durkhhoyf, G1
6 Goon's kloyz, F1
7 Góra Zamkowa, D1
8 Góra Trzykrzyska, D1
9 Great Synagogue, G1
10 Green Bridge, C1
11 Jewish Hospital, F2
12 Kehillah Building, D1
13 Lumber Market, C2
14 Maccabi Playing Field, (
15 Market, C3
16 Old Jewish Cemetery, D
17 Ostra Broma, D2
18 Ramayles' (Reb Mayles')
19 Synagogue Courtyard (s
20 St. Anne's Church, D2
21 St. John's Church, D1
22 Stefan Batory University.
23 Strashun Library, G1
24 Taharath Ha-Kodesh (Ch
25 YIVO, C2
26 Zaretcha Jewish Cemeter

WILNO

History of Wilno
Family life
Russian history
Position of Jews in Russia
Comparison with life in the U.S.
Family life, description of family members
Father's business
Beylis affair
Russian intelligentsia
Similarity of Okhrana and Stalin
Twilight of the Czarist regime
Tolstoy

Today is the 16th of April, 1975. Within two months I will be 78 years old. I have just returned from visiting my critically ill wife at the hospital. On January 25th of this year a stroke deprived her of speech and paralyzed the right side of her body. Since her chances for even a partial recovery are poor, this event turned my life into a relentless nightmare.

Unaccountably, even though my wife's serious illness had long foreshadowed its fatal denouement, these tragic events caught me unawares and, psychologically, entirely unprepared. This unpreparedness, I assume, is caused by the fact that, even near the conclusion of my life's path, I still have not reconciled myself with the inescapable, neither for myself nor for my wife.

The purpose and meaning of human life continue to be an unsolvable riddle for me. Even now I reject from the depths of my soul death as life's inevitable conclusion.

At this tragic moment in my life, returning from the hospital, I decided to undertake the writing of my memoirs. This I have long promised my daughter. She assures me that it is the most precious inheritance that I can leave to my descendants.

Moreover, my age as well as the recent events are a clear indication that, if I wish to keep my promise, I should delay the writing of my memoirs no more.

I was born on the 13th of June, 1897, in the city of Wilno, which now is called Vilnius and is the capital of Soviet Lithuania.

The city is situated picturesquely on both shores of the river Wilya, a tributary of the river Niemen.

The streets of the city were predominantly narrow and crooked, with two and three-story houses. Even though according to its area and population it was one of the larger cities of the Russian Empire, at the turn of this century it still lacked municipal water and a sewerage systems. Even though the streets were illuminated at night by gas lamps, they were paved with cobblestones and the sidewalks were wooden.

Passenger traffic went by hackney carriage and by streetcars pulled by emaciated horses on iron rails which intersected the city from North to South and from East to West.

At the same time, however, this was a city with a rich past of which spoke its numerous ancient buildings and monuments.

There were the ruins of the old castle built in the 14th century by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gedimin on the hill by the confluence of the Wilenka and the Wilya rivers and the Catholic Cathedral in the main city square with its vast catacombs, its classical columned front and its separate bell tower the lower part of which was built in pagan times; the city possessed also numerous architecturally valuable Catholic churches and Orthodox monasteries. One Catholic church (Ostra Brama) with Our Lady's image was venerated as the greatest shrine by the Poles. Another, the Gothic Saint Anna church, pleased Napoleon so much when he visited it during his march on Moscow that he reportedly wished he were able to carry it to Paris.

Among the other valuable ancient buildings one should mention the University founded by the Polish king Stefan Batory in 1578 as well as a palace once used as residence by Napoleon and in my time by the governor-general, and the castle of the Lithuanian Radziwill princes, 5-6 kilometers from the center of the city up the Wilya, in Werki.

Among the Jewish monuments of the past destroyed by the Nazis in my time, one should remember the historic Jewish ghetto, the Great Synagogue built in 1573 and also the old Jewish cemetery with the tombs of the Gaon of Wilno and of Ger Tzedek - the Polish count Potocki who was burned at the stake for converting to Judaism.

Oddly enough Wilno, although considered Lithuania's historic capital, did not number any Lithuanians among its inhabitants. Its population of over 200 thousand consisted, prior to World War I, mostly of Catholics who spoke Polish poorly but considered themselves Poles, with 35% of Jews and a small percentage of newcomer resident Russian officials.

This paradox, so frought with consequences as we shall see, that the capital of Lithuania did not have a Lithuanian population, is a result of two historical facts:

1) When Gedimin moved the Lithuanian capital to Wilno in 1323, the political boundaries of Lithuania were set far beyond the limits of its ethnic boundaries and the new capital was founded on Byelorussian soil.

2) The 1569 Lublin Union of Lithuania with the culturally more advanced Poland entailed the Polonization of the city dwellers and the nobility of Lithuania.

Thus when, after World War I, a number of politically independent states was formed on the ruins of the Romanov, Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires, our city became an apple of contention between Lithuania, which referred to history, and Poland, which pointed to the Polish majority of the population.

In 1795 Wilno became Russian in accord with the Third Partition of Poland and then, as a result of the two unsuccessful, cruelly suppressed uprisings of 1830 and 1863, both Poland and Lithuania lost all their autonomy and became provinces of the Russian Empire; the old Polish University was closed.

The city became a large administrative center.[1]

The Czarist government commemorated the absorption of the city by Russia and the suppression of the Polish uprising with two monuments erected in Wilno: one of the Empress Catherine the Great, by whom Poland was partitioned, the other of General Muraviev, who put down the uprising in Lithuania with such cruelty that he was called Muraviev the Hangman. During World War I, before the seizure of the city by the Germans on September 5th, 1915, these monuments were removed from their pedestals and taken into the depths of Russia.

---

[1] The residence of the Governor-General of the northwest territory, of the Governor of the province of Wilno, of the commander of the regional troops, of the trustee of the school district, as well as the seat of the Regional Court and of the Court of Appeals. The military garrison of Wilno was composed of the 27th and half of the 43rd infantry divisions, the 43rd mortar artillery division and the 3rd Don Cossack Regiment.

With the joining of Lithuanian-Byelorussian soil to Russia, the Russian government set about the Russification of the territory and in secular schools Russian was declared the only language of instruction.

Admittedly, this Russification did not affect the Jews much in the course of the last century, since in the absence of compulsory education in Russia the Jews continued to attend their religious schools, the so called "kheders", and thus preserved Yiddish as their conversational language. However, after the Russian revolution of 1905, with the acceleration of the process of inclusion of the Jewish masses into the secular culture, Russian became the language of conversation of the Jewish intelligentsia.

Being a large railroad junction, uniting Eurasia with Western Europe (through Wilno passed expresses which united the capital, St Petersburg, with Paris and Vienna, as well as with Southern Russia - Kiev and Odessa), the city developed well before the First World War and its population grew in numbers.

The famous Jewish publishing house "Brothers and Widow Romm" supplying the whole Jewish world with prayerbooks, Pentateuchs and commentaries was situated in Wilno before the first World War. Pre-war Wilno was also the location of many other branches of industry of interlocal significance - those of timber, woodworking and leather as well as the only vegetable oil manufacturing plant in western Russia. There were many large (by that day's scale) tanneries and sawmills in the city, as well as paper and cardboard factories.

Lithuania and Byelorussia abounded in forests, predominantly of pine and fir. The timber was floated to Wilno on the Wilya and its tributaries, where a major part of construction lumber was sawed at the local sawmills and a lesser part of it went uncut on the Wilya and Niemen to East Prussia.

In addition, large quantities of fir went by railroad to German factories in Koenigsburg, Tilsit and Memel for the manufacture of cellulose. Large quantities of timber were floated on the Wilya to the city for fuel. Not only were apartments and institutions heated exclusively by firewood, but at that time wood was also used as industrial fuel.

Of the branches of business with interlocal importance, the fur business should be mentioned. The furriers of Wilno were intermediaries between fur-rich Siberia and Leipzig, then a very large world center for the tinting and dressing of furs.

Flour mills, breweries, brickmaking plants, glove and stocking factories, handicrafts and retail and wholesale businesses supplemented the economy of Wilno in czarist times.

One should note here that in the epoch which preceded mass production with its standardization of sizes and tastes, handicrafts played an incomparably larger role then than they do now. Apart from peasants, only the poorest of the city population bought ready-made clothing and footwear. The majority ordered clothes and shoes to their own measure from artisans.

It should also be mentioned that in Wilno then, as in all of the Jewish "pale", i.e. in the western part of European Russia where Jews were allowed to live, all business and industry, though handicrafts only partially so, was in Jewish hands. In the "pale" the Jews owned also a major part of urban real estate.

This situation was the consequence of a number of factors.

On one hand there was the low intellectual level of the poorly educated, illiterate majority of the Gentile population, and the prejudice of the Polish-Lithuanian gentry which made it shunn business and industry as degrading occupations.

On the other hand the legal restrictions imposed on Jews by the Czarist government deprived them of the opportuniy to work farms, cut off access to

governamental positions and scientific work and complicated with Jewish quotas the obtaining of education for the free professions.
This left handicrafts, business and industry as the only occupations to which Jews had free access.

Moving on to the history of Jews in Lithuania, one should note that they had come from the West, when Jews, members of the old communities on the Rhine - Worms, Frankfurt, Mainz and others, ran east, escaping from the slaughter of Jews during the Crusades. In Poland and Lithuania they found tolerance on the part of the Polish kings and even defense from the persecutions of the townsmen.

There exists also an opinion that the Lithuanian Jews are partly descended from the Khazars who wandered in the steppes at the Caspian sea at the beginning of our millenium and who professed Judaism (the Khazar Kaganate). In confirmation of this opinion they point out the absence of Semitic facial features among the majority of Lithuanian Jews.
However, against this theory speaks the fact that Yiddish, the conversational language of the Jews of Lithuania, is an old German dialect with an admixture of ancient Hebrew words and contains nothing that would speak of our supposed Khasar ancestors.

Jews first appeared in Wilno in the 15th century, and in 1573 the community was already so numerous that it was able to build the "Great Synagogue". The Jewish community of Wilno was especially famed in the time of the "Gaon" of Wilno, Reb Eliyahu, 1720-1797. In the 18th century a religius trend, of an irrational- mystical character, known as Hasidism, received wide dissemination among Jews of Eastern Europe.
The Wilno Gaon repudiated Hasidism and successfully opposed its spread in Lithuania. Under his guidance Lithuania became a world center of the traditional rationalist school for the study of Talmud. The Yeshivas of Wilno and its neighboring towns [2] began to attract Jews from all over the world and Wilno was acclaimed as the Jerusalem of Lithuania.
Application to the study of the Talmud of a strongly rationalist method which rejected all mysticism and metaphysics undoubtedly prepared the Lithuanian Jewry for that outstanding role which it played in almost all Jewish political and religious movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In the second half of the 19th century Wilno was the citadel of the "Haskala" and "Muserniks" movements. In 1897 the Jewish Socialist party, or "Bund" was founded in Wilno. It will be superfluous to talk about the wide participation of Lithuanian Jewry in the Zionist movement. Of this speaks the fact that, returning from St. Petersburg in 1903, Theodor Hertzl considered it necessary to stay in Wilno.
But Wilno played its most outstanding role, being its Mecca, in the populist movement famous under the name of "Yiddishism".

During hundreds of years the Jews, confined to the ghettoes, surrounded by alien and hostile multitudes, had their gaze fixed on the distant past, jealously guarding the old forms of life from generation to generation, rejecting every new concept incompatible with traditional Judaism, as they did, for example, with Baruch Spinoza.
Nevertheless, the rationalist trends of the European epoch of Enlightenment reached also its Jewish communities.
The so-called "Emancipation of the Jews" began in western Europe a hundred years earlier than in eastern Europe and led not only to full assimilation, but in many cases to the departure from Judaism of its leading intellects.

---

[2] Wolozhin, Mir, Slobodka and others

I will return again to the role of "Yiddishism" in the epoch when, under the pressure of secular ideas, the walls of the orthodox Ghetto crumbled in eastern Europe as well, and religion ceased to be the main factor holding the Jews together and supporting their national self-hood when I describe events between the two World Wars.

My father Leyba Esterowicz was born in 1865 in the small town of Michalishki, within 50 miles of the city of Wilno, to the less than well-to-do family of Gershon and Chava Esterowicz. According to the stories of my grandfather, his father, Moishe Goldstein was 14 years old when the Grand Armee of Napoleon crossed through the hamlet in its march on Moscow in 1812. Moishe's wife, my great-grandmother Esther, came from the small town of Ivenetz.

They had three sons and, in order to protect them from the horrible snatching of the Jewish little boys into the infamous "Cantons" of Czar Nicholas Ist and the inhuman 25 year conscription, they gave each one a different last name. With this they transformed each one into an "only son" and saved them from the "Cantons" and the conscription. The eldest son retained the last name of the father, Goldstein; for the last name of grandfather Gershon they used the name of the mother - Esterowicz, while for the last name of the third son they used the name of the place of birth of my great-grandmother - Ivenitzki.

My grandfather Gershon was born in 1824 and lived his whole life in Michalishki. After the death of his wife Chava - this happened soon after my birth - he moved to Wilno to live with us. As much as I can remember him, he was a good-natured, frail old man, with a long milkwhite beard. Grandfather wore the traditional Jewish "kapote" and walked three times daily to the synagogue to pray. While he lived, the whole mode of life in our family was of a strictly Orthodox character. He died and was buried in Wilno in 1911 at the age of 87, when I was already 14 years old.

Before his death grandfather Gershon requested of us that, if any of his great-grandchildren was to be named after him, we should not change the name Gershon into Grisha in the Russian manner, for Grisha was the name for a peasant from the nearby village and grandfather could not accept this.

Remembering grandfather Gershon, one involuntarily thinks of the paradox that the "emancipated Jew," carefully shaven and physically erect, was in many cases psychologically bent, corroded by an inferiority complex, continuing in his soul to wear the humiliating "zheltaya lata," or the yellow patch which the hostile Middle Ages had affixed to his ancestors.

But Gershon, in his long "kapote" and with his long beard, externally and physically a humbled Jew, had no complexes. To the contrary, he looked with pride on the earthly mission, entrusted to them by God, accomplished by his people; in his soul he looked down on the surroundings which were alien to him.

When my father was eight years old he was already so successful in his studies of the Talmud that in Michalishki there were no teachers advanced enough for him, and my grandmother took him to relatives in the town of Oshmiany for the continuation of his education. The eight-year-old boy could not bear parting with his mother and with a cry "mama! mama!" ran for a long time after the cart taking his mother away.

From this moment on my father began a life full of deprivation, of wandering among the "Yeshivas", which lasted a full ten years.

At the age of 18 my father completed his education and went to the Ukraine in search of a living. Regrettably, the details of this period of my father's life are not known to me. In 1888 my father met through a match-maker and married my mother, Margalit Zeligman, whose mother Mera was also born in Michalishki.

My grandmother Mera was the only daughter of Leyzer Shenyuk, a rich timber-merchant who lived in Michalishki, but owned two estates as well as houses and plots of land in the city of Wilno.

During my life time my great-grandfather Leyzer Sheniuk built a synagogue on one of his building-lots in Wilno; my father was its elder by election for eighteen years, right up to his death. By the will of Leyzer the other elder was to be one of his descendants in the male line.

By a strange coincidence, the Bar Mitzvah of my son-in-law Wowa (William), whom we encountered only after the Second World War, in Italy, took place in that very synagogue built by the great great-grandfather of his future wife, my daughter Perella.

My mother's father, Saul Zeligman, was born in 1818 in Wilno. His father Shebsel, "der Halfen", which in Hebrew means literally "the money changer," worked on Niemiecka street, (the business center of Wilno right up to its destruction by the Germans), at the business traditional for the Jews since the early Middle Ages - the trade of precious stones and articles made of gold and silver.

About my great-grandfather Shebsel and his wife, my great-grandmother Chwolka, my mother told me the following as a fact: All this happened, it is to be supposed, in the beginning of the last century, when count Tyszkewicz, whose estates surrounded the city, ordered the turning out of all the Jews from the lands, mills, dairies, etc. leased by them, because one of his Jewish lease-holders was caught in misappropriation.

These events agitated the whole Jewish community. It so happened that at that very time my great-grandmother Chvolka bought a big set of table silver from Count Tyszkewicz and, coming home, discovered that she had underpaid the Count, since the silver set weighed significantly more than they thought it did. When my great-grandmother returned and gave the Count the unexpected additional sum, the fact that he could see that there were honest people even among Jews, astounded him greatly...

The Count ordered my great-grandmother to be seated at a table and every Jewish lease-holder had to come and thank her and, receiving from her a note that he had done so, he could get back the livelihood from which he had been turned out.

Returning to my grandfather Saul, I remember him as a tall, slender old man, strong in body and spirit, whom we feared greatly when he shouted at us for our pranks in the synagogue. My grandmother Mera was his second wife and he also was her second husband. Grandmother Mera had been married for the first time at the age of 14 to a man named Gershater, had three sons and one daughter by him and was widowed very early. I never knew grandmother Mera, since she had died before I was born.

Almost to the end of his life, and he lived almost to the age of ninety, my grandfather Saul was a lumber-measuring agent in Wilno. Since on the basis of his measurements computations were made in the millions of rubles yearly, this was a respected profession since it demanded complete trust on the part of both the sellers as well as the buyers of timber. The measuring was done on water. The wood arrived by river, already cut into logs.[3]

---

[3] three fathom or twenty-one feet in length. The thickness of the logs was measured by the top diameter in English inches; the unit of sale was the so-called "Prussian kopa" - 126 logs of three fathom or twenty-one foot length.

Previously grandfather Saul had also been officially recognized as an expert in precious stones and metals, as attested a diploma prominently displayed in his house.

In connection with this specialty the government had at one time made Saul travel to the place of procurement of precious stones - the Ural mountains. This was before there were railroads and the trip by horse-drawn cart took many months. It happened right after their marriage and grandmother Mera struggled mightily against this. She had to petition the Governor General himself to have her husband returned from the road, which they did, even though he was already beyond Moscow.

Grandfather Saul died in the following circumstances: In Wilno there was a custom that the numerous Jewish poor who lived on the outskirts would walk from house to house two times a week - on Tuesdays and Fridays - to collect alms, which they demanded as something coming to them. On those days grandfather, winter and summer in the same frock coat, stood at the gates of his house with a snuffbox filled with half-copecks, which he distributed among the passing beggars; one should remember that then a pound of bread costed five half-copecks.

It was in the cold winter frost of 1908 that grandfather Saul, in the ninetieth year of his life, caught cold distributing alms and died.

Grandmother Mera had given her second husband two sons - Shebsel and Joseph and three daughters - Chana, Nechama and my mother Margolit, the very youngest.

Although at that time in Wilno some Jewish girls had already begun to atttend secular Russian language schools (although these were rare cases, to be sure), my mother had been taught at home. She was taught to read and write Yiddish and Russian, but the main emphasis was placed on preparing her for the role of mother and housewife - she could cook, cut and fit clothes, sew and embroider. When my father married he received 1200 rubles as my mother's dowry, which he lost when the pottery works he built burned down - my parents asserted it was by fault of his partner who turned out to be dishonest.

Having lost the dowry, my father began to assist grandfather Saul, and took over from him the position of a lumber measurer when grandfather became aged and could not carry out this activity any longer.

Simultaneously father began to mediate between sellers and buyers of wood, for which he received a separate commission. The deals were made on the weight of a word and only in rare cases, when large quantities of wood, which were to be furnished during the floating season (in winter the river froze for five months), were in question, was a written contract composed in Hebrew - it was then kept by my father.

The forests in Lithuania and Byelorussia belonged predominantly to the Polish-Lithuanian gentry, but some belonged to the state. The rapacious felling of woodland was forbidden, and it was sold already cut to timber merchants (exclusively Jewish), according to a plan set forth beforehand by the government.

My father's commission business, which later was also connected to the financing of deals by him, was so successful that in the beginning of this century he stopped the measuring of wood. In 1906 he was already in a position to buy a large piece of real estate at No. 28 Wilkomirskaya street. This was a complex of stone and wood houses standing on more than an acre of vacant ground on which drilled the soldiers of the Novo Troksky regiment whose barracks were located in one of the wings of the complex.

This real estate, with the conversion of the barrack wing into apartments, cost my father around 30,000 rubles, and before the war brought in yearly 4,500 rubles of net profit.

In the last years before the First World War, father had a considerable line of credit with the banks (including the government one) which he used for the financing of his deals; he held a central position in the timber market. Receiving only a 1% commission, father's earning reached 20,000 rubles a year.

In order to give an understanding of the ruble's real value then, I will cite several figures: black bread cost two and a half copecks, boneless meat eight copecks a pound; the salary of a servant was five rubles, of the lowest clerk twenty and of a beginning railroad engineer - one hundred rubles a month.

In her marriage to my father my mother gave birth to six children - four sons and two daughters. The eldest son Iser was born in 1889, a son Chaim (Yefim as we called him) in March of 1891, a daughter Esther (Emma), in October of 1892, a daughter Chana (Anya) in March of 1894, a son David in December 1895 and myself, Shmuel (Samuel, Munia), the very youngest, in June of 1897.

The eldest son Iser died as a child before my birth during a cholera epidemic. My mother recalled her first-born until the end of her life with tears in her eyes and described him as exceptionally able and gifted.

Unfortunately it was not possible to say this about my older brother Yefim, as we will see later.

My mother told me that I was a beautiful child. I vaguely remember myself as a small boy with long golden curls, the subject of coddling by the friends of my older sisters and of unrestrained love from our maid, the Jewish girl Braynke who chased after me and paid me a copeck from her own pocket for every glass of milk I drank and entered into battle with my every offender in the courtyard.

I was born, as I already mentioned, in Wilno, on the corner of Wilenska and Mostowa streets at the "Green" bridge spanning the river Wilya. The house - or more accurately a complex of two and three-story stone houses surrounding a vast cobblestone paved courtyard with an artesian well in the middle, was the property of my mother's cousins, the brothers Aaron and Lazar Sheniuk. In the absence of municipal water our house had its own water supply. Each apartment received water fron a reservoir which was located under the roof of one of the houses, a motor pumped water into it from the artesian well.

As customary, our house had a janitor, Carl by name, whose sons were our constant companions in our games in the courtyard. The duty of a janitor was to watch after cleanliness inside the house and the part of the paved street adjacent to it as well. Since transport then was only by horse, he had to clean the street several times a day and in the summer had also to pour water on it. In winter, when for five months it was a sleigh road, he had to clean the sidewalk of snow and to strew it with sand so that it would not be slippery.

The gates of the house would be locked by key for the night and those coming after eleven in the evening had to call for the janitor to let them in. The janitor had also a registration book for the house into which the local police would write in the name of everyone staying in the house on arrival and strike the name out upon departure.

With the improvement of our financial situation, we changed apartments several times while staying in the same house - each time to a bigger and better one.

For the last apartment, which had a balcony, a main entrance and a service entrance and consisted of six rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom and a tightly separate place for a portable water closet, before the war we paid 700 rubles a year.

In each room in a corner stood a stove of glazed tile. Birch was used for heating, pine for cooking. Since winters were long and severe, the walls of the houses were two-and-a-half bricks thick and the windows were double-framed; before closing them for the winter the chinks were stopped up with wadding and sealed on top with strips of paper, so that the cold would not penetrate.

In the cellar of the house every apartment had a separate place for potatoes and vegetables and in the courtyard a separate wood-shed for firewood. In the common cellar-icebox, where in the winter square blocks of ice were brought from the river and stacked in layers, each tenant had a place for a bin in which perishables were kept.

The milkman brought milk daily and early in the morning a bakeress named Chana would send different shape rolls, strewn with poppy seeds, onions or sugar.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, peasants gathered in the neighboring Lukishki square bringing varied products. From them we bought vegetables by the sack: potatoes, cabbage, onions, turnips and carrots; berries by the basket: wild strawberries, bilberries and cranberries; small eggs by the "kopa" (sixty); different fowl, such as hens, roosters, ducks, geese, and turkeys; also cheeses and pieces of meat; mushrooms: chanterelle, boletus, maslyaki; fruit: Antonowka apples, Sapezhanka pears, cherries, garden strawberries and gooseberries, mostly sold by weight. Vegetables were stored up in the fall for the winter - the peasants poured them right from the sacks into the cellar.

In the summer jams were made, predominantly from cherries and garden strawberries and in the fall from cranberries. We bought kosher meat, asking the butcher to give us the fattest piece and sent the fowl to be cut by the kosher butcher. My mother's kitchen was strictly kosher - dairy and meat items had separate bowls, plates and utensils. During the last seven years before the war we had two servants: a Christian girl for cleaning and a Jewish cook. The larger linen items we gave out to be washed at a laundry and the parquet floor in the drawing room had to be rubbed with a floor polisher.

I do not remember when we installed electrical lighting. I vaguely recall that a servant used to clean the lamps and filled them with kerosene. We had a telephone installed in 1904, number 408. Speaking of our telephone in those times, an image of my father instinctively comes to mind. During my frequent bouts of severe membranous throat infections (once it was even neccessary to give me an injection of Diphteria serum), in contrast to my mother who kept her self-control, my father would panic and call our pediatrician, Doctor Makover, at night. As the youngest of the family, in my childhood I was my parents', especially my father's, darling. I guess my father was impressed by my quick wits and my precocious talent for mathematics.

Even though my brother David was one-and-a-half years older than I was, I was always the one to whom an angel would throw down a coin as a reward for a correct answer to the question posed to the both of us, so that, despite the difference in age, we began school at the same time.

In my early years religion and tradition gave form to our lives, with the synagogue which adjoined our house playing an important role. Women sat separately from men in the synagogue, a separate staircase led to the women's half, elevated by half a floor. A massive wall separated them from the men, with big windows through which they listened to the worship service solemnized in the male half. Public worship in the synagogue took place three times a day. On New Year and Yom Kippur a good cantor was invited for a special fee. Wilno was renowned for its cantors, many well known cantors of the first half of this century [4] began their cantorial careers in the Great Synagogue of Wilno.

The means for the maintenance of the synagogue were drawn from yearly donations of the congregation and from the sale of honors at the worship services and the reading of the Torah. The Shames (custodian) reb Mote collected the promised donations and counted them up in the presence of my father, who from 1908 on was one of the two elders. On Fridays we did not have our usual dinner at three o'clock in the afternoon, but were served a festive supper with gefilte fish and meat and with Chala instead of bread. To this supper my father always brought from the synagogue two of the soldiers who were serving their military obligation in our city.

My father had great knowledge of the Talmud and of Hebrew, in which he corresponded and composed sales contracts, and was deeply dedicated to Zionism. In 1903, when I turned six, he sent me and David to a special school, set up in a secular manner, where the language of instruction was Hebrew. There, along with the study of the Pentateuch and the Prophets, we were taught to speak and write Hebrew on dictation and then recapitulate what we had written. We subscribed to Hebrew children's magazines from Odessa. Since Palestine was then under Turkish dominion, in school we wore Turkish fezzes. The students at this school were children of prosperous families, among them my best friend, Alosha Perevozki, of whom there will be more later, and also the son of Isaac Goldberg, a famous Zionist who had donated land for the University of Jerusalem.

Upon conclusion of school in 1905 we began to prepare for Russian secondary school when an interruption ocurred. In November 1905, at the height of the first Russian revolution, fearing riots and mainly the anti-Jewish pogroms, our whole family went to Germany, where we spent three months in the East Prussian city of Tilsit, as recounted subsequently.

In 1905 the immediate cause of the long ripening revolution in Russia was the firing on the crowd in the square of the Winter Palace, the residence of the last Czar, Nicholas, with hundreds of killed and wounded. A peaceful crowd of St Petersburg workers went there on the ninth of January led by the priest Gapon to present a petition to Nicholas for the introduction of political reforms. It must be noted here that although Russia was a state governed by law, i.e. ruled on the basis of laws promulgated beforehand, it still continued to be an absolute monarchy at the beginning of this century. Laws were enacted at the initiative and at the command of the Czarist government, without the participation of representatives of the people - Russia remained in all respects a backward country as a result of this.

Prior to 1905 the struggle against the unlimited power of the Czars was carried out by a handful of people, mainly from the intelligentsia, among whom were members of the gentry and even of high aristocracy; the struggle was expressed through underground agitation and the spread of printed appeals for the overthrow of the Czarist regime, as well as in sporadic terrorist acts against the Czar, the members of his family and his servitors. After the bloody events of the ninth of January this struggle took on an open, mass character, with unceasing assaults on the representatives of the authorities and uprisings - in the cities, also in the Black Sea naval fleet (under the leadership of Lieutenant Schmidt on the cruiser "Potemkin"), as well as general strikes which brought the life of the country to a stand-still.

Undoubtedly one of the reasons for the revolution of 1905 was the dissatisfaction with the Russian defeats in its war with Japan in the Far East.

---

[4] Sirota, Gershman, Kusevitsky, Steinburg and Roitman

Forest operation at the Yalu river in Korea by a court clique headed by the military figures [5] served as an excuse for this war. Without a declaration of war the Japanese attacked and sank the Russian battleship Petropavlovsk in the harbor of Port Arthur; many perished there, among them the Russian Admiral Makarov and the well-known painter Vereshchagin. Apart from the calamities engendered through governmental bungling, the conduct of the war was also made immeasurably more difficult for the Russians by the fact that they had only one single track rail-line for the transport and supply of troops to the 10,000 kilometers distant site of the theater of military operations. The following military reversals strengthened still further the anti-government feelings in the country:
the siege and the surrender of Port Arthur by its commander, General Stessel; the defeat of the main Russian military forces under the command of General Kuropatkin at Mukdenin in Manchuria; the destruction under Tsushima of the Russian Baltic fleet, which, under the command of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, had to double around Africa to come to the Far East since the British refused to allow it passage through the Suez Canal.

The Government responded to the erupting revolution with a command to the police "to stint no bullets", with the introduction of martial law and field tribunals, and also with the dispatch of a number of punitive detachments - to the Baltic [6] to Poland [7], to Siberia[8], and to the Caucasus[9] .
But under the pressure of events, when these severe measures only exacerbated the revolution, on the advice of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Sergey Yulevitch Witte, Czar Nicholas issued a manifesto in October 1905 with which he limited his authority, imparted to the people personal rights and civil liberties and also announced elections to the government Duma (parliament).
Subsequently, before his replacement, Witte concluded the disastrous war with Japan on not too onerous terms, through the mediation of president Theodore Roosevelt, signing the peace treaty in Portsmouth.

When the upheavals did not cease after the October Manifesto, my father decided to leave the borders of Russia temporarily and in November of 1905 we, along with the family of my mother's cousin, Lazar Shenyuk, went to East Prussia, to the city of Tilsit. On Friday evening, with the permission of the rabbi, we left the alarms and unrest of Wilno, and next morning arrived in Tilsit, which breathed of idyllic peace and order. Of the things in Tilsit which especially astonished me, an eight year old, I recollect that we could safely hang our room-key by the door when leaving our room in the hotel and that the passengers of the electric train, (I encountered this wonder for the first time in my life), put the fare into the cash-box on their own.
Residing for the winter in Tilsit, we returned home when the uprising in Moscow was suppressed by troops which had to come on foot from Petersburg because of the general strike, when the revolutionary movement subsided.

We never suspected then that the most difficult times for the Jews would come only at that time, when the Czarist government would avenge itself on the Jews for their active participation in the revolution and would organize a series of pogroms in Odessa, Kiev, Gomel, Belostok, Sedltse and other cities. The pogroms against the Jews were organized by the local reactionary organizations, with the assistance of the clergy, the local authorities and of the police. The pogromists, who were attracted by the chance of looting Jewish property with impunity, were recruited among the peasants of the area. During the pogroms the unbridled gangs did not restrict themselves to plunder alone; the pogroms were always accompanied by cruel murders, not only of men, but also of defenceless women, children and the old.

---

[5] Bezobrazov and Vonlyarsky
[6] Sivers and Orlov
[7] Meller-Zakomelsky
[8] Rennenkampf
[9] Alikhanov

Although our city had been spared the pogroms, we too spent days and nights full of fear, especially, however paradoxical it may sound, on days of religious processions, when the Catholic clergy glorified Jesus Christ, who preached love and all-forgiveness; just on those very days we locked ourselves as best we could in our houses and were afraid to venture out onto the street. Of such days full of terror I recall most vividly the Catolic holiday [10] in June of 1906, when we sat barricaded in the house fearing a pogrom in connection with the huge procession going past our house. Suddenly, to our endless joy, an unusuallly forceful summer thunderstorm, bursting out with an enormous downpour, drove the participants of the procession in all directions and, in the absence of a sewerage system, formed a big lake at the gates of our house.

In some cities, Odessa among them, the pogromists met such a successful repulse from the Jewish self-defense that they themselves had to ask for protection from the police. I also remember that, fearing pogroms, the Jews in our quarter had also organized a self-defense, the focus of which was our synagogue. Night watches were organized and, since we intended to resist the pogromists, some guns were purchased, crowbars ordered from the blacksmith and women were provided with bottles of sulfuric acid.

As mentioned by me previously, the Jews, for understandable reasons, took a most active part in the revolutionary movement from its very inception. A Jewess from Wilno, F. Genfman was one of the five sentenced for the murder of Czar Alexander II on March 1st, 1881; in 1902 (I remember this vaguely), a Jew, Hirsh Lekert, was hung in Wilno for shooting at and wounding Van Vahl, the Wilno Governor. The list of leaders of the socialist parties and of the terrorist organizations contained many Jewish names. Leon Trotsky, the organizer of the Bolshevist coup of October 1917, was as early as 1905 the Vice-Chairman of the Soviet (Council) of Workers' Deputies of St. Petersburg. The pogroms indicated that the Czarist governmant, which remained in power, did not forgive the Jews their role in the revolution and, as subsequent events showed, neither was it reconciled with the concessions which it was compelled to make to the people with the promulgation of the October Manifesto. The first two Government Dumas (Parliaments), elected on the basis of general suffrage, were radically minded and refractory - they were prematurely dismissed by the Czar's decree. The so-called "Census Duma", convened on the basis of a new electoral law which granted the right to vote to the possessor classes only, i.e. had a property qualification for voting, was less opposition minded and to a great degree co-operated with the government. Among the Third Duma, however, there were liberals and also small fractions of socialists and Jews. True, they were not able to enact any of the indispensible, long awaited laws; to make up for it they widely used the Government Duma as a people's rostrum in order to expose the misuse of power and the lawless activities of government branches which were holding on to old ways. At the post of Premier, Peter Stolypin replaced Sergey Witte.

---

[10] "Boze Cialo" (Polish for the Body of God)

The rallying cry of the new premier, Peter Stolypin was: "Control first, then reforms", but the point of departure of his legislation was the assertion that the people had still not matured enough for civil liberties and self-government.
Stolypin's address to the Government Duma went into history when he said, turning towards the leftist opposition and pointing his finger at them: "They need great upheavals, but we need a great Russia". Stolypin did give Russia calm, but only temporarily so, as future events would show. He did not do anything, did not introduce the urgent reforms needed to make Russia "great", and more importantly - to ward off the advancing cataclysm. True to the interests of his landowning class, he did not parcel out the large estates to satisfy the landhunger reigning in the overpopulated country side. His agrarian reform foresaw only the transfer of the peasants from the prevailing communal use of land to individual farmsteads. Moreover, very little was done to encourage the peasants to change from the three-field system to the rotation of crops and thus to raise the productivity of peasant holdings. Since it was easier to make ignorant people embrace the cult of "Czar-Little-Father", anointed of the Lord and thus hold them in obedience, Stolypin did not hasten with the introduction of compulsory education in the country. Moreover, since this would demand reforms of the country's antisocial taxation system, nothing was undertaken to struggle with the scourge of the Russian people, i.e. with their drunkenness. With the complete absence of an income tax, the government budget relied predominantly on the returns from the monopoly on sales of spirits introduced by minister Witte. Before opening any schools the government opened a liquor store in every village, the so-called "Monopolka", where the peasants drank up their last half-copecks. But if the achievements of the revolution of 1905 were for the Russian people more than modest, for the Jews the results, (without counting their losses during the pogroms) were undoubtedly negative in relation to their legal status. All the pre-revolutionary legal restrictions against the Jews were not only retained by the government after the revolution, but in several cases, with different administrative interpretations, they were even exacerbated - such as the access of Jewish law school graduates to the bar.

In one respect, however, the consequences of the '05 revolution were huge and indelible - a wide gap had been breached in the walls of the Orthodox ghetto and a fatal blow delivered to Jewish isolation. Before the '05 revolution the majority of Jewish children attended Orthodox schools, the so-called Cheders. After '05 boys and girls not only from prosperous Jewish families but also the children of small tradesmen, employees and even artisans began to attend secular secondary schools and boys went also to the technical and commercial schools. In order to enter these schools the children had to be able to read and write Russian and perform all four arithmetic operations. The secondary schooling lasted nine years and tuition had to be paid. Schooling was six days a week, for six hours a day. The success of the pupils was evaluated with the help of the five-point system. In the spring of every year examinations were given, those who did not pass could repeat the exam in the fall. If the pupil failed the second time, however, he was held back to repeat the whole year. If even this did not help, the pupil was dismissed from school.

Discipline was very strict in the schools. Good conduct and unquestioning obedience were demanded of the pupils. For misconduct the pupil would be put in a corner, sent out of class, held at school for several hours after classes and even dismissed from school. For especially serious transgressions they were dismissed without the chance of entering another school, (blacklisted).

Corporal punishment was forbidden in my time. The relation of the teacher to pupils was strictly formal - he addressed them by their last name, using the formal "you" and, upon meeting a student, expected a respectful greeting. In addition there existed for high-school students the so-called "out of school supervision", according to which the students were forbidden to go out onto the street after 8 PM, or to attend theatrical performances without the written permission of the class preceptor. Boys and girls studied in separate schools and wore the uniforms designated for them. The programs of instruction were worked out for each type of school by the Ministry of Education; all subjects were obligatory to every student. In the male schools, the students of the so-called classical gymnasia (which upon completion gave the graduate the chance of entering the Medical and Juridical Departments) studied Latin beginning with the third grade, besides the subjects customary to all secondary schools, which were:
Russian literature and language, mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, geometry with trigonometry,) geography, history (ancient, medieval and modern), foreign languages (German and French), cosmography, logic with psychology and for each religion, God's Law.
Upon completion the student had to pass the final exam and those who succeded were given the "Maturity Diploma" which gave them the right to enter the institutions of higher learning - universities and special institutes.

The admission of Jewish pupils to the public and the so-called "full rights private high schools" and of high school graduates to institutions of higher learning were restricted with a percentile norm, i.e. their number could not exceed 10% of the general number of students. Although Jews composed only about 4% of the general population of Russia and 11% of the population of the "Pale", the 10% quota established by the government for Jewish students was a very painful limitation. In the establishment of this qoota it was not taken into consideration that, in the cities of the Pale where they were concentrated, the Jews often outnumbered the Christian population significantly and as a predominantly urban element provided a large percentage of those engaged in the learned professions.

The problems connected with the acquisition of a secondary education were in large measure resolved for the Jewish children with the opening at the turn of this century of commercial schools and private high schools, among them high schools in which final examinations were conducted in the presence of a "deputy" - an Official from the School District, but in which the percentile quotas for Jewish children were not applied. In Wilno, as in other cities with a large Jewish populations, a high school[11] was established exclusively for Jews.
The problems for the Jews in connection with the application of the Jewish "Quota" to the entry to the institutions of higher learning were significantly more complicated. The only way out was to study abroad, but only children of prosperous families could afford this.

In 1906 my brother David and I entered the preparatory class of the Posotsky private gymnasium. My first school years, which coincided with the period after the '05 revolution, were influenced by the disappointment caused by the defeat of the revolution. The disappointment was intensified by the disclosures that a number of the revolutionary leaders were provocateurs who acted on the instructions of the "Okhrana", the Czarist Secret Police. Among them: Father Gapon, the organizer of the peaceful procession of the workers to the Winter Palace on the ninth of January; Yevno Azef, the leader of the terrorist organization of the Socialist-Revolutionaries; Roman Malinowsky, member of the Bolshevik faction in the Government Duma... and others.

---

[11] P.I. Kagan.

At the same time, under the influence of secular ideas the orderly old Orthodox world, in which all questions had answers, began to quake under my feet, to be destroyed for all time. This process was facilitated and undoubtedly speeded up by the fact that the Orthodox religious concept misused the authority of God and had recourse to him not only in serious questions, such as the goal and meaning of life, the mysteries of death and reconciliation with it, but also in questions of daily life and even hygiene. My inquisitive young mind, which for the study of secular sciences resorted to analysis and demanded logic, from my earliest years could accept only with difficulty the primitive explanations which were good and perhaps even indispensable for primitive people wandering in the desert.

As a result, at the age of thirteen or fourteen I had already lost my faith which, by eliminating questions to which there were no answers used to ease my life and tinted my childish world in light and tranquil tones. With faith departed the world where all was so clear, so simple, where order reigned and there were no doubts. With faith departed also the feeling of security and assurance that there was someone in the world vigilantly watching after order and seeing to it that truth should triumph. I felt very painfully the emptiness engendered in me by the loss of faith... until I got accustomed to it. I also wish to add that up to now I have not succeded to fill this emptiness, for even today, at the end of my life's journey, I have no answers to the questions "where to and what for?"

I did well in the gymnasium in spite of the fact that I did not distinguish myself with diligence. As a rule I did not prepare the assigned oral homework and managed to make up for this during recesses. I was rescued by my rather good abilities - especially a good memory and also by my attentiveness during lessons.

The progress in learning of my brother David, in spite of his great diligence, was only average. In the lower grades I was one of the best pupils in mathematics, but later my favorite subject became history and in this subject I had no rival at school.

From my earliest years the reading of books was also the subject of my enthusiasm. I began with adventures, especially of American Indians - the books of Main Reed, Gustave Emar and Jules Verne and the detective stories of Conan Doyle. These were followed the historical novels of Walter Scott, Avenarius, Alexander Dumas and the works of Russian and foreign classics. In the gymnasium the course of Russian literature was limited to the so-called classics: the poets - Pushkin, Lermontov, Koltsov and Nekrasov - and the writer-dramatists - Gogol, Turgenyev, Tolstoy, Dostoyevski and Goncharov, to mention just the greatest. A solid knowledge of the works of the classics was indispensable for the writing of the compositions assigned to us on year-end examinations and for homework during the year.

Dostoyevski impressed me most of all the writers with his deep psychological analysis, his emphasis on the contradictions in the Russian nature and exaltation of human suffering. In my early youth my favorite poet was the Byronist Lermontov, a little later he was joined by Pushkin.

With the exception of Alexander Blok, whom I consider a poet of God-given talent, the famous Russian poets of the beginning of this century, such as the Symbolists [12] could not replace the classics for me. I have remained faithful to the classics up to now and even today the reading of Pushkin's "Poltava" and Lermontov's "Slovo o Kuptse Kalashnikove" affords me pleasure of which I do not find the equal in the reading of other poets.

---

[12] Belmont, Valery Bryusov, Maksimilian Voloshin, even more so the later ones - Mayakovsky, Igor Servantin and others.

As I mentioned previously, I read a lot from earliest years on, not only the books of Russian, but also of foreign authors, the latter almost exclusively in prose. For reasons unknown to me up to now, I did not find pleasure in reading foreign poets in translation. But along with this it is hard to find a book of such foreign authors [13], which I had not read in my youthful years. A little later to these authors were added [14] and others.

The American writers I read in this period, besides Jack London, were Mark Twain, Edgar Poe and Upton Sinclair, but the book "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Beecher Stowe impressed me most of all.

We had a permanent dramatic theatre in Wilno, (the company of Belyaev) with the actresses, [15] in the main female roles and the actors,[16] in the main male ones.

Besides the plays of Russian dramatists,[17] there were also foreign ones [18] in the repertoire of the theatre.

In the summer theatre, in the Bernardynka garderns, the operettas: The Merry Widow, Gypsy Love, Die Fledermaus and others were put on, often with tour performances of the famous Warsaw operetta singer Kavetskaya. We gymnasium pupils could attend the theaters only with the written permission of the class preceptor. It should be added here that opera also came on tour to Wilno. I heard the operas "Carmen" of Bizet and "Eugene Onegin" of Tchaikovski for the first time in my life in Wilno.

Besides reading books, I got interested unusually early in political events and already at the age of ten-eleven began to read the daily newspaper [19] the editor of which was a certain Radin. In connection with this fact I recall the following: My friend Alosha, though only two months older, was a whole grade ahead of me and a very good student in addition. His parents were very proud of his successes in school and always would have with them his report card (issued every quarter), which usually consisted only of fives (As), and displayed it during their visits to my parents. Alosha's mother, Eva Matveevna, apparently could not reconcile herself with the fact that I read newspapers and was well-informed about all political events, in which Alosha did not show any interest. She repeatedly advised my parents to forbid me the reading of newspapers as very harmful at my young age.

Already in 1904, as a boy of seven, I was interested in the course of the war with Japan in the Far East and I remember that the Russian reverses were very painful for me - the fall of Port Arthur and the defeats at Mukdem and Tsushima.

To those readers of my lines to whom my patriotic feelings will seem strange I wish to say that, in the first place, the anti government feelings of the Jews engendered by the Czarist persecutions could not always stifle in me the feelings of attachment to the country in which I lived and whose air I breathed, natural to every boy; secondly, that the picture of Jewish life in Czarist times has received and is still receiving inaccurate elucidation and appraisal. In spite of the fact that, looking through the prism of events of the last sixty years one should see this life in its appropriate colors and perspective, it continues to be painted as an uninterrupted and bloody nightmare. For reasons only partly understood by me, the appraisal of and conclusions drawn on this question are made on the basis of only partial truth, applying to it moreover a methodology with which it is hard to agree.

---

[13] Alexander Dumas fils, Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, Gustave Flaubert Henryk Sienkiewicz, Guy Mopassant, Knut Hamsun, Jack London.

[14] Romain Rolland, Yakov Wasserman, Thomas Mann, Stephen Zweig.

15) Raevskaya, Sarancheva and Mansvetova

[16] Rybnikov, Michurin, Vyrubov and Davidovsky.

[17] Griboyedov, Gogol, Ostrovsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Gorky and others.

[18] Schiller, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Moliere, Rostand and others.

[19] Severozapadny Golos - the Norhwestern Voice

I will begin with the fact that, talking about the circumstances of the Jews in Czarist Russia, conclusions are made by comparing their position seventy-eighty years ago with the condition of Jews in America today, thus forgetting that at the turn of this century the life of Jews in the United States, according to how it has been described, differed little from life in a small Jewish "shtetl". Looking from the height of recent achievements here in America, there is a mistaken tendency to attribute the low standard of living in the shtetl solely to the legal restrictions and persecutions of the Jews, without taking into consideration the fact that the objective conditions for the achievemment of standard of living advances were completely different in Russia and America.

On the one hand the United States, with its fast-growing industry based on great riches in raw materials and industrial fuels, with its literate, enterprising and energetic population which had found sufficient fortitude and resolve to cross an ocean in order to change their destiny; its government, elected by the whole people, watched out for the interests of the country.

On the other hand Russia had just abolished serfdom, its inert, illiterate peasant majority was still clad in bark foot-coverings, and was still adhering to the archaic three-field system and the woooden plow; its reactionary government, interested only in preserving the privileges of the possessor classes, was not concerned about the developement of the productive forces of the country and in addition kept the people in ignorance, making drunkards of them with vodka (the tariff on vodka was the main item of income in the government's so-called "drunken budget"). Russia has a reputation for natural wealth, but the little-known fact is that European Russia was poor in hard coal, the main type of industrial fuel before the introduction of the diesel (before the First World War in Russia oil served for the purpose of lighting only). Russia's huge metal-working industry, concentrated around Petrograd, was fueled in Czarist times with English Cardiff coal, since to bring coal from the distant Donbass in rail-cars which would have to run back empty was unprofitable.

As shown by investigation, rich fields of high-calorie coal constituted in the last century the main source of industrial fuel and were the decisive factor in the determination of the location of large industry. The smelting of steel was concentrated not in Lotharinghia, rich with iron ore, but in the coal-rich Ruhr basin, and the huge cotton industry was not developed in Egypt, where cotton of the best quality grew, but in Manchester, near deposits of high-calorie coal. The complete exploitation of the iron riches of the Ural became possible today only after the so-called pendulum system allowed the utilization of the newly-discoverd coal riches in the remote Kyzbass i.e. iron ore was sent there in exchange. This shortage of coal of European Russia was the reason why the first step of Lenin on the road to industralization was the construction of power plants.[20]

Thus regarding the different objective conditions in the United States and in Russia, one can only come to the correct conclusions concerning the living conditions of Jews in Czarist times by comparing their position at the turn of this century with the living conditions at that time of the non-Jewish population. Applying this approach, every unbiased investigator will come to the conclusion that, despite legal limitations, pogroms and expulsions, Jews lived in better circumstances in Czarist Russia than did their non-Jewish fellow countrymen.

---

[20] of Dnieprostroy and Volchovstroy

The picture of this life is drawn in American literature and periodical press from personal stories, i.e. as remembered by the first wave of Jewish immigrants, which consisted exclusively of the poorest part of the population of the Russian cities and boroughs. They saw the Jewish reality through the prism of their own privation and (as shown by facts and statistics), in a definitely distorted way.

I would like to remark here that no conclusions can be drawn from the mere fact of Jewish poverty in Czarist Russia. There are still poor people even in the wealthy United States of today, despite the laws concerned with the poor, sick and elderly. In the absence of all social legislation, poverty was more than inevitable in economically backward Russia and the poor were far from being composed of Jews only. Undoubtedly true and testifying to the hard material situation is the fact that in the second half of the last century, in the period coinciding with the rapid natural increase in the Jewish population as a consequence of the falling mortality rate [21] the Jews had to abandon the overpopulated shtetl en masse in search of some means of making a living. They settled partly in the cities of Russia and partly, numbering around a million, emigrated across the ocean. According to the same Leszczynsky, for that period the number of Jews in the city of Lodz increased sixty times, in Ekaterinoslav - twenty, in Kiev - fifteen and in Odessa ten times. Also undoubtedly true is the fact that the overpopulated non-Jewish village also left en masse in order to feed itself - for seasonal work and partly, breaking its connection with the soil, settled in the cities.

In the name of that same truth one should note that along with the Jewish poor in the cities of the "Pale", in addition to the Jews who possessed fortunes in the many millions of rubles, [22] there existed a very numerous class of prosperous Jewish families. In order to enable the reader of these lines to make the right conclusion as to the economic position of Jews in Czarist times, suffice it to say that our family was not one of the wealthy Jewish families, it belonged to the prosperous ones.

Wilno then numbered three Jewish millionaires [23] and not less than ten Jews with fortunes of over half a million rubles [24].

Composing only 4% of the population of Russia, the Jews played a considerable role in almost all branches of the national economy, incommensurable with their numbers and a dominating role in the Pale, where lived 40% of the population of the Empire. In foreign trade, the export of grain, wood and furs (the three Russian commodities which found a foreign market), was pioneered by the Jews, who continued to control it. Jews owned not only all the savings banks in the "Pale", including the largest, Vavelberg's in Warsaw, but also stood at the head of a number of large discount banks. [25]

---

[21] according to the statistician Ya. Leszczynsky, the natural increase was expressed in the figures of 9.16 per thousand in 1867 and 18.3 in 1896.

[22] like Baron G.O. Ginsberg in Petrograd, Vysotski and the Polyakov brothers in Moscow, Lazar Brodsky in Kiev, Vavelberg in Warsaw, Poznanskis an Osher Kohn in Lodz.

[23] the timber merchant David Baranovsky, the wool merchant Aaron Zhuk and the banker Israel Bunimowicz.

[24] Solomon Baranowsky, Gesziya Szklarewicz, Adolf Gordon, I. Morgenstern, Izidor Szabad, Abram Baranowsky and others

[25] such as the Azovsko-Donskoy (Kaninka), the Russian-Asiatic (Khesin), the Siberian (Soloveychik), the Discount-Loan (Utin), the United (the Polyakovs), the Russo-French (Rubinstein), the Anglo-Russian (Benenson), and in almost all the banks (with the exception of Moscow Merchant and the Volzhsko-Kamsky), Jews were members of the board.

Led by the Polyakov brothers from Moscow and Ivan Bliokh from Warsaw, Jews managed, as concessionaires, the covering of European Russia and of the former Polish Kingdom with a net of railroads.

Jews, mainly the Brodskys, dominated the Russian sugar industry and, in the "Pale", also the forest, wood-working and tanning industries, the brewing and flour milling and, along with the Germans, dominated the huge textile industry with centers in Lodz and Bialystok.

In addition a large part of the city real estate in the "Pale" belonged to the Jews. Scattered throughout Russia as doctors, lawyers, engineers and pharmacists, the Jews were also richly represented in the free professions; thus the assertion that, despite the legal restricions and persecutions, Jews were some of those most successful in Czarist Russia, appears hardly disputable.

As a matter of fact, this assertion finds full confirmation in the facts that, aside from the gentry, only Jews left Russia in throngs for foreign resorts in the summer and also that thousands of Jewish young people from Russia had the neccessary means to afford studying at the universities of Germany, Switzerland, France, Austria and Belgium.

The following were the main legal restrictions against the Jews in Czarist times:

Foremost and most damaging was the so-called "Pale", outside of which Jews were forbidden to take up residence. It received its first legislative formulation in the "Status of the Jews" promulgated in 1804 by Czar Alexander I. It was supplemented in 1882, under Czar Alexander III, with the "Temporary Rules", which established "a Pale within a Pale", since they forbade Jews to settle and buy real property outside of the cities and small towns within the "Pale" itself. The right to take up residence and move about anywhere in Russia was held by individuals with higher education, dentists, pharmacists, midwives and the former "Nicholas" recruits and their children. The right to settle anywhere in Russia was held by individuals engaged in a certain number of handicrafts but they could reside only in the place in which they practiced their craft.

The notorious percentile norm for individuals wishing to enter the public secondary schools and universities was established relatively late - in 1887 under Alexander III - it was contrary to government policies under the Czars Alexander I and Nicholas I. Under the latter the government encouraged the acquiring of secondary and higher education by the Jews - this lessened the Jewish isolation and facilitated their blending with other nationalities. According to the primary Russian law, Jews were supposedly entitled to government positions, in as much as they possessed the neccessary accomplishments and degrees. In reality, the government, with its instructions, interpretations and circulars, made the pursuit of government positions by the Jews possible in only exceptionally rare cases. Since the Jews were not accepted to the military academies, the so-called Junker Institutions, they could only fulfill their obligatory military service as rank and file soldiers.

The main problem of Russian Jewry did not lie in the laws and practices which restricted their rights. They were able partially to adapt themselves to these laws and partly to evade them, bribing the poorly paid officials - the Jews joked: "In Russia one can manage to get along, as long as the village policemen together with his horse makes twenty rubles a month." In the capitals many Jews lived illegally, i.e. without being registered, as so called "doorkeeper's subjects" - paying a bribe to the doorkeeper of the house, who in his turn had an arrangement with the police.

But life abounded also in periods of utter tragedy for Russian Jewry, mainly because of the anti-Jewish policies of the governments of the last two Czars - Alexander III and Nicholas II. These governments placed varying groups of Jews in desperate, even hopeless situations with their series of sudden decrees.

Of such actions the following were especially notorious: the mass expulsion of the Jews from Moscow in 1891 and during the first World War, in 1915, the general expulsion of the Jewish population, accused of spying for the Germans, from the zones near the frontlines in the Kovno and Kurlandya provinces.

Among other horrible schemes: in 1882 and 1906, these governments organized bloody pogroms with the help of the reactionary "Chernosotenzy" - Black Hundred organizations; these resulted in many dozens of killed, among them women and children.

These governments also contrived the accusations and trials of Jews for supposed ritual murders - Blondes in Wilno in 1899, Beylis in Kiev in 1911 - and others.

Analyzing the anti-Semitism in Czarist Russia, one should note that, in distinction to the one that exists up to now in many other countries, in Russia the anti-Semitism bore an official character, i.e. it was directed by laws and decrees of the government. It had no elements of racism - changing his faith, a Jew acquired all rights. Its peculiarity was also that, whereas it was predominantly governmental in Russia, Byelorussia and the Baltic, it had deeper roots in Poland and the Ukraine, where hatred of the Jews bore also a popular character. This hatred had in the Ukraine a tradition back to 1654, when the Hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki, freeing the Ukraine from Polish rule, joined it to Russia with which Ukraine shared a common Orthodox faith and, at the same time perpetrated a general slaughter of the Jews.

In this analysis it is impossible to pass over in silence the lethal role of the last Czar, Nicholas II, in the fate of the Russian Jewry. Under the influence of the "Chernosotny" bands and of his adviser, the reactionary Pobedonostzev, Nicholas had persistently, often against the advice of his ministers, held to his anti-Jewish policy. The premiers Witte as well as Stolypin understood that the persecutions and the restriction of rights for the Jews brought no benefit and inescapably pushed a numerous and active part of the urban population toward not only the legal, but in many cases also the revolutionary opposition. However, all their attempts to repeal, even if in part, the restrictions against the Jews were invariably rebuffed by the refusal of the Czar to confirm the pertinent proposals of the Ministerial Council. Of one such attempt, undertaken in 1906 by Premier Stolypin, which foundered on the stubborness of Czar Nicholas, dwells at length in his memoirs Count V. Kokotsev, Stolypin's successor to the post of premier.

The picture of the Jew's situation in Czarist times would not be complete if I did not mention that, along with the reactionary organizations, whose motto was: " Kill the Jews, Save Russia", there also existed in Russia a more numerous liberal sector of the society. This sector sympathized with and helped the Jews, fighting together with them for equality and justice for all, as did the idealistic students, of whom there will be more later.

Of the numerical correlation of these forces and of the frame of mind of the urban population (while the illiterate villages remained completely passive), the following fact appears indicative: with the exception of the semi-official "Novoye Vremya" (New Time), all the authoritative, big circulation newspapers, [26] were all of a liberal slant. Not less revealing appears the fact that the first Govrnment Duma (Parliament), selected in 1906 by the whole people on the basis of the right to general suffrage, in response to the throne speech of the Czar unanimously demanded the repeal of all restrictions and privileges. Thus the Jews were not alone in days critical for them and had numerous and active friends in the ranks of Russian intelligentsya who supported them not only morally, but, as in the matter of Beylis, with deeds. This was a circumstance of great importance - if it did not tint the Jewish life in raibow hues, it at least saved it from hopelessness.

I consider that it would not be superfluous to get acquainted with certain rather revealing comparative statistical data. During the hundred years from 1815 (when, upon the decision of the Congress of Vienna, the Duchy of Warsaw was annexed by Russia and the Western borders of the "Pale" had been definitively established), to 1915, according to Leszczynsky, the Jewish population of Russia had increased - despite the fact that during that time one million Jews had emigrated - from 1,200,000 to 5,450,000 people. In this same period the general population of the empire had increased from 45 million to 180 million. The above cited numbers show that the population growth of the Jews was 40% higher then that of the population of the country as a whole.

Concluding this survey of the life of Jews in Czarist Russia, I would like to note that, for reasons unknown to me, neither in the literature nor in the periodical press of the United States does the fact find sufficient reflection that, with the exception of the times of sporadic, bloody anti-Jewish outbursts (1882 and 1906) which, however painful they were, appear only as episodes against the background of a hundred-year period, in Czarist Russia there existed for the Jews conditions under which they could:
emigrate freely;
propagate faster than the rest of the country's population;
be awarded, equally with others, the active and passive right of suffrage - in all four Government Dumas there had been Jewish factions;
pray to their God and observe their customs and religious injunctions - ritual slaughter and others;
institute and maintain synagogues without any limitation;
maintain their separate hospitals, old age homes, cemeteries and other institutions and levy taxes for this purpose (collection boxes);
participate in the popular and political parties and movements - insofar as they did not advocate the overthrow of the existing order;
study in religious (yeshivas etc.) and in secular secondary schools, but with limitations in entry to the institutions of higher learning;
take up residence and live in the cities and small towns of the Western part of Russia only, the so-called "Pale", where lived 40% of the population of the country (Jews with higher education or a free profession, also handcraftsmen, could settle throughout the country).
Without having access to governmental positions and with only a limited one to farming and the free professions, Jews engaged in the trade and industry of the country; they could still achieve great monetary successes (as much as this was possible in a poor and backward country), and enjoyed a standard of living higher than that of their Christian neighbours.

---

[26] such as "Rech" (Speech), "Den" (Day) in Petrograd, "Russkoye Slovo" (Russian Word) and "Russkiye Vedomosti" (Russian News) in Moscow. "Kievskaya Mysl" (Kiev Thought) in Kiev, "Odesskye Novosti" (Odessa News) in Odessa, and also the popular papers such as "Birzhevye Novosti" (Stock Exchange News) and "Gazeta- Kopeyka" (Penny Newspaper) in the capital.

We know full well that Jews in Soviet Russia can not even dream of such conditions today.

For reasons which one can only guess at, in the United States, along with a strong highlighting of the negative side of Jewish life in Czarist times, the fact is also obscured that the assumption of power by the Bolsheviks delivered a fatal blow to the relative Jewish prosperity in Russia. It was the Bolsheviks who, without improvement of the conditions of life of the workers, destroyed the national economy in which millions of Christian workers were employed by Jews, but not vice versa. Jews paid dearly for a temporarily leading role in the Soviet government and "equality", perishing (more than the other nationalities) in the cellars of the Lubianka and in the torments of the arctic camps; with the conversion of the official and open Czarist anti-Semitism, predominantly only governmental, into Soviet anti-Semitism which, though cravenly hidden became nation-wide and thus more virulent.

I consider it appropriate to mention the question of personal sefety here - a question which acquired exceptional acuity in today's American life. I can say here that, at that time, with the exception of the period of the '05 revolution and the pogroms which followed the war (fortunately, Lithuania and Byelorussia escaped those), each of us experienced a feeling of complete personal safety. Even though theft and burglary were every day, frequent occurrences, I can not recall even one instance of anyone in my surroundings, who was subjected to an attack for the purpose of robbery, not to mention of anyone who was killed. I also can not recall a single case where anyone close to me, from fear of people of bad will, had not undertaken a trip for the timber business - on horseback, often at night and to the most remote and uninhabited places.

On the whole murders were a very rare phenomenon then. Looking back, I can recall only two murders - and these on the ground of jealousy - when the Gendarme Captain Demyanovich killed the son of the Wilno banker Israel Bunimowicz, having found him in a hotel with his wife, and the trial of engineer Mozheyka, who was accused of the jealous murder of the Jewish student Lifshits. The trial of a Polish aristocrat also comes to mind - Obrien de Lassi was accused of collusion with a Doctor Panchenko to murder his brother-in-law with poisonous injections and later take possession of the inheritance of his father-in-law, the Wilno landowner General Buturlin.

Comparing the conditions of life in Russia then with those in the United States today, the question arises which urgently demands an answer: where lie the reasons for the fact that, in spite of great poverty which usually engenders crime, in Czarist Russia we see a relatively insignificant amount of really serious crimes and, in respect to personal safety, the conditions reigning there one can boldly call idyllic in comparison with the conditions prevailing in the rich America of today ?

Personally, I am convinced that the reasons for the relative Russian well-being and what I would call the catastrophic Americam situation lie, if not in full measure then to a great degree, in the principles on which the judicial process is based in these countries, in Russia then and in the United States now; here I consider it neccessary to point out the similarities as well as the differences in important features of this process.

In both countries torture during investigation is forbidden by law, criminal offences are indicted by a jury and the accused has a right to a defender. Of the main distinctions it should be pointed out that, whereas at that time in Russia (as in the majority of European legal procedures) the accused had to prove his innocence in the face of evidence, in the American legal procedure it is the government, in the person of the district attorney, which must prove the guilt of the defendant. Moreover, the accused in Czarist Russia was not protected by the rights and freedoms stemming from the American Constitution, mainly from the "Habeas Corpus Act", by which the suspect can be arrested only by order of a Court, and from "The Fifth Amendment", by which the accused has the right to refuse to answer any question of the Court if his answer might be used for his incrimination. Moreover, in distinction to the United States, where a verdict of guilty can only be taken in accordance with an unanimous decision of all the jurors, in Russia the question of the guilt of the defendant was decided by a simple majority of the jury.

Comparing the main principles which regulated the criminal court procedures in both countries, it must be admitted that in Czarist Russia the possibility of judicial error was greater than in the United States, but this weak side was atoned for (with interest) by the fact that the Russian justice system, as we had seen, was able to fulfill successfully its basic functions and to defend the vital interests of the country's inhabitants. As mentioned previously, Russia, even though still an absolute monarchy, was a state ruled by law. Jurisprudence of the country (outside of the former Polish Kingdom, where the Civil Code of Napoleon was binding), was regulated by the Code of Laws of the Russian Empire, which was based upon Roman Law and had been codified at the beginning of the last century, under the Czar Nicholas I. [27]

Moving to the justice in the United States and analyzing the principles and laws which regulate it, it strikes one strongly that in them one finds the reflection of the highly sorrowful experience which the first settlers had in Europe, where in the period of Absolutism injustice and tyranny reigned and torture was used in the courts. In the history of American justice, in spite of the fact that European conditions are now absent, the aspiration to defend its citizens from a "ruthless" governmental machine is conspicuous like a vivid red thread; as guaranteed by the Constitution, a court was created in which errors would be almost excluded and the personal rights of everyone would be observed. I would like to add that in the United States' Supreme Court the aspiration of creating an absolutely just trial by the promulgation of new standards and the interpretation of old ones continues up to the present with unabated vigor.

This is being done, disregarding the fact that each step on the road to realization of the doctrine of a fair trial paralyzes still further the Hand of Justice, already weakened by the Constitution, with all its tragic consequences:
the increase of the feeling of impunity among people of bad will and, connected with this, despite the improvement of living conditions in the country, the uninterrupted growth of the number of serious crimes and the growth of a feeling of defenselessness and fear among wide circles of the population.

Of the fact that, for the tendency to convert the doctrine of a fair trial into a goal onto itself, the population of the United States pays yearly a heavy tribute with the lives of thousands killed and hundreds of thousands mutilated, robbed and raped, cry out all kinds of statistics:
for example, more crimes are committed in New York alone than in all of Japan, with its fifteen-times-larger population.
About the fact that in the United States, in the land of the free, a large part of the population is deprived of one cardinal, basic freedom - the freedom from fear, will tell us any resident of a Metropolitan Area.

---

[27] Speransky

We know from experience that any doctrine, however good in itself, brings harm instead of good if it is carried to extremes. Unlimited freedom leads to unendurable anarchy - as the Russian experience with "wage levelling" had shown, in the application of the principle of absolute equality in the distribution of material goods besides hunger there was nothing to divide.
It is bad when people can be executed without a trial and investigation, just on the resolution of a "Troyka" of a Special Section - as we see in the bitter Soviet experience. But as today's American reality shows, a not much better situation is created when the pendulum swings too far to the other side.
Only a balance between the two antagonistic factors, i.e. the right of the individual to a fair trial and the right of society to have the means to defend the vital interests of its citizens from people of ill will gives the correct answer to this question. The reclamation of the oscillating balance between these two factors will undoubtedly demand changes in the laws which, unfortunately, it is hard to expect in the near future with the existing "hereditary obsession" in the United States about the right to fair trial. As of now, I am convinced that wide circles of American society have not yet discerned the truth that the only legitimate ultimate goal of policy of a modern government is the well-being (in the all-inclusive sense of this word), of its citizens; all the other doctrines, such as freedom, equality, justice and others appear only as means which are good in-so-far as they facilitate the attainment of this main end.

Having described the governmental structure and political events of Russia, as well as the financial and political position of Jews, on the background of which flowed my childhood and part of my adolescent years, it is time to return to our family chronicle. As mentioned previously, my older brother Chaim or, as we called him, Yefim, displayed, from his earliest childhood on, neither abilities nor inclination for learning. All the efforts of my parents, especially of my father, to give him even an average education foundered on his sloth and stolidity. Neither tutors, nor rewards, nor punishments helped; as a result he was discharged from the fourth grade of the Commercial school, after being held back for a third year and with this his education had to be terminated. This left my parents in a very perplexing situation, which was still further complicated by the fact that those traits of character so prominent in the rest of the members of our family, namely truthfulness and a highly developed sense of duty, were lacking in my brother Yefim. After my mother's suggestion that Yefim should be taught some handicraft was turned down by my father, in 1909 my parents had to, at his insistance, let the eighteen-year-old Yefim go to the United States, where my father's brother Samuel resided in New York.

Here I would like to touch upon a misconception widespread among the well-to-do Jews of that time. For reasons unknown to me and not well understood, a handicraft occupation was not esteemed by the Jews at that time and, as we saw, my father was not free of this bias. The dream of every Jew in the last century was to be a rabbi or a rich merchant - in my time it was to be a member of a free profession, such as a doctor, lawyer, engineer and so forth. Somehow an artisan occupied a lower place in the social ladder than a tradesman. In the synagogue the place in which a member of the congregation sat denoted his social standing. The places in the synagogue at the eastern wall, facing the rest of the congregation, were considered the most esteemed and desirable - at this wall sat the rabbi and the scrolls of the Torah were housed.
The places at the east wall of our synagogue were occupied exclusively by merchants - there was not a single artisan there. Touching upon Jewish mentality, we undoubtedly valued wealth and knew the worth and power of

money, but in distinction to Americans, who mostly value learning for the sake of its practical application, among Jews there existed from ancient days a cult of the intellect and of the abstract thought. It is the descendants of the rabbis, the great thinkers, who represent the Jewish aristocracy. The rich Jew seeks for a son-in-law not the son of another rich man, but a young man highly cultivated in the Talmud; the Jewish women, like my great-grandmother Chwolka, took over the toil for the daily bread in order to give their husbands the chance to immerse themselves peacefully in the study of the Talmud.

As regards the groundless preference for trade over handicrafts, Jews finally realized the harm of this mentality which facilitated the needless proliferation of the commercial apparatus and the raising of a class of so-called "luftmenschen" (German or Yiddish for useless people). Already at the beginning of this century, Jewish societies such as "Trudovaya Pomoshch" (Work Help) and the O.R.T. opened free technical and handicraft schools to make the labor of the Jewish population more useful and productive.

Returning to my brother Yefim, he did not stay long in the United States and returned home within one-and-a-half years (to be murdered by the Nazis thirty years later). His stay in New York coincided with a time when my father's brother Samuel had financial difficulties and father was constrained to help him. In 1911 Yefim became seriously ill with acute rheumatic fever. I remember he was cured with high doses of salicilate, but the disease left him with organic heart disease. Because of this he was freed from the four year military obligation.

Trying to set Yefim up, father made him a partner in the representation to Russia of Fry, the English chocolate and cocoa firm. The business was not successful however, and the partner ate up the 5,000 rubles father invested in it. Yefim was a handsome and inoffensive fellow, but with little sense of responsibility; in addition, to put it mildly, he was inclined to exageration ... Even after his marriage in 1919, as the father of three children, he was still unable to achieve financial independence and needed our father's help to the end of the latter's life - and after father's death the help of the rest of the family.

My sisters Emma and Anya were intelligent and did well in the private gymnasium of Vinogradova, from which Emma graduated in 1911 and Anya in 1913. My sister Esther (Emma) was not very beautiful. She was tall, with eyes shining with goodness and intelligence, but her appearance was marred by her excessive stoutness. This shortcoming was compensated many times over by her intellectual and moral qualities; she was very well liked by women and as a girl won the favor of men - usually men six to ten years older than herself. She was an intelligent, well-informed girl, with a well-developed sense of justice and a faith in mankind. Possessing a pleasant contralto voice, with a good musical ear, Emma sang a lot. At home we had a piano and, accompanying herself, Emma performed well and with feeling not only popular songs from the repertoire of Plevitskaya and others and the then fashionable Gypsy romances (Morfessy, Varya Panina and so on), but also romances of a serious genre - Tchaikovsky, Arensky, Grechaninov and others. We did not suspect then that this gentle, good-natured, plump girl possessed a remarkable moral strength which, as we shall see, she displayed magnificently at the time when fate knew no mercy for her.

Since at that time views that women could work professionally in addition to their role in the family as mothers and housewives did not yet reach our surroundings, when Emma graduated from the gymnasium our parents began to give serious thought about marriage for her. Since marriages for love were relatively rare then, the majority of marriages were arranged by matchmaking;

as was the custom of those times, brides received from their parents money as a so-called dowry, in addition to a wardrobe. When it became known to the professional matchmakers that Emma would receive 12,000 rubles - a respectable dowry in those times, suitors began to come to us for a bride-show from all over Russia. Among them, I remember were engineers from St.Petersburg and Riga, an editor of a Russian newspaper in Grodno, a merchant from Aramvir and others. Despite the fact that my sister Emma pleased the visitors - I suppose her gentleness, warmth and intellect impressed them - she delayed her choice. I will return later to the reasons why she procrastinated with her decision.

In her early years fate smiled on my sister Chana, or Anya as we called her. Tall, slender, with a good figure and an attractive appearance, with merry, sparkling eyes, a lively mind, and to the marrow of her bones a woman, her banter pleased her youthful acquaintances, many of whom fell in love with her. Becoming engrossed in the reading of sentimental novels of the then fashionable authoress Verbitskaya, she likely in her girlish dreams saw her future in rosy colors. But as we will see, long before the Hitlerian cataclysm, my sister Anya, like Pushkin's Liza, had many reasons to exclaim with reproach: "my girlish fancies, you have betrayed me!" Skilled at studies, she graduated from the gymnasium without difficulty and in the fall of 1913 left for Paris where she enrolled at the Sorbonne.

From his early years on, my brother David was exceptional in the generosity and uprightness of his character. David and I were inseparable in childhood - we attended the same grade in the same school, played together with the boys in our courtyard and, having gathered fifteen copecks, ran together to the nearest cinema - the "Fantazya", where silent movies were featured, usually with Max Lindner and Harold Lloyd. But the main subject of our enthusiasm was Greco-Roman wrestling.

Peasants from the surrounding villages came to the central bazaar square with their products two times a week; yearly the May fair was held there in the newly constructed wooden pavillions with sellers from all the corners of Russia; a round wooden building was raised there, and performances of visiting circuses took place in it.

In addition to the usual circus acts, contests in Greco-Roman wrestling took place there as part of the performance. In the so-called "International Championships" of Greco-Roman wrestling, each wrestler represented a different country and one of them always bore the title of champion of the world, which all the other wrestlers disputed. The winner was the one who pinned his opponent on both shoulder-blades. We took everything very seriously and never suspected that the so-called championships represented in actuality a well-rehearsed company of artists, where each had his role to fulfill and where the results were established beforehand. For myself and David the bout did not end at the circus - it continued at our house and always ended in a draw since while I was stronger, David was more dexterous than I was. Admittedly, our couches and divans were the losers in this, for their springs undoubtedly suffered from our enthusiasm for battle.

Football (soccer) came to us from England in my early years and soon became the most popular sport. Yearly, in the spring, football contests took place between the local gymnasiums. I was abler at studies than David who, though very dilligent, needed a tutor who helped him to prepare the assigned homework. In 1911 the private gymnasium of Pesotsky in which my brother and I were students closed and in the same year I entered the fifth grade of the newly opened full-rights gymnasium Katkhe, whose director was the former director of the school district, Pyatnitski. David was accepted into the Commercial school, but he had to lose a school year in the transition.

I have already touched upon the commercial activities of my father. In a relatively short time he achieved a central position in the timber industry of the North-West region and attained financial success. His fortune at the eve of war was valued at 120,000 rubles (the buying power of the ruble then equaled approximately ten American dollars). Christians hostile toward Jews were inclined to explain the successes of Jews, and with this find justification for their own failures and futility, with the supposed Jewish shiftiness and unreliability.[28] What I saw in the house of my father cathegorically refutes this malicious fiction and slander. Father's deals - in millions of rubles yearly - were closed on a hand-shake and I cannot recall even one case which ended with a trial in the Czar's courts. The punctual and exact fulfillment of what was agreed upon, as well as solid worth were the neccessary prerequisites for success in this business world, which consisted exclusively of Jews, and to which I was a witness. In the last years before the war father began to supply with logs the saw mills in the city of Kovno (where the Wilja flowed into the Niemen). I recall one fact in connection with this which speaks as much of the great confidence in my father's probity as of the high standard of business ethics of that time. In 1913 my father came from Kovno with 50,000 rubles in cash as a deposit for timber from the biggest sawmills of Kovno.[29] Russia did not know of checks as means of payment. Deals could be accomplished by promissory notes, but all payments, such as on promissory notes or for other commitments were made with paper rubles, which the government bank would convert to gold without restrictions. As mentioned by me previously, my father's commission business was associated with the financing of deals; on the one hand the financing of the timber dealers, upon the purchase by them of forests for logging from the landowners or the state - the cut timber was then sent (by floating it down the river) to father for sale; on the other hand, the paying of the sellers and discounting the promissory notes of the buyers who sawed up the timber into boards. In both cases father employed the help of banks (the government one among them) at which he was trusted and enjoyed a great line of credit. Receiving a 1% commission, father bore a 100% responsibility for payment on the promissory notes. In 1911 alone, when a number of buyers went bankrupt and did not pay on their promissory notes, father had to cover their unpaid notes for 25,000 rubles out of his own pocket. This strengthened my father's unsullied reputation and consolidated even more his position in the timber market.

On the eve of the First World War, in 1914, father signed a contract with a syndicate of all of the Wilno sawmills that was being formed in Wilno, by which father was entrusted with all the purchase of timber for the syndicate. This contract would have brought my father a return of 40,000 rubles a year, but due to the war it was never consummated.

It would be appropriate to add that the principles to which I adhered following in the footsteps of my father during the time of my commercial activity not only helped me to attain financial success, but also facilitated in great measure our miraculous survival (myself, my wife and daughter) during the Hitlerite cataclysm.

Characterizing my father as a person, I should emphasize that we children not only loved him, but also respected and were proud of him. Not without certain weaknesses and prejudices peculiar to his surroundings, he was a man of high moral principles, great mind and tact. His love and devotion for us children was not expressed in caresses and gifts. From my childhood years I can recall only one gift, a camera which I received upon passing to the 5th grade. When my father kissed me when I was ill with acute myocarditis in 1912, this was so unusual for him that I understood that I was critically ill. In those times childhood illnesses posed a greater danger to life than they do now and my father's love for us was apparent when any of us fell ill - his alarm and worry about us knew no boundaries.

---

[28] the so-called "shakher-makherstvo"

[29] that of Ozhinsky and Soloveychik.

Yes, my father did not squander his devotion on trifles, but there was no scrifice too great for him when any of us were in danger or need and he did this with such generosity, without reproach, even in those cases when we fully deserved a rebuke.

Father had great knowledge of the Talmud, he knew Hebrew well and corresponded in it; he also spoke and wrote Russian quite well.

My father was moderately religious; he prayed each morning, and as an elder went to the synagogue on Saturdays. He was reconciled with the freethinking and unbelief of his children and was relatively tolerant of our "sins". Deeply devoted to Zionism, as a director of "Keren Ha Isod" he collected funds for the purchase of land in Palestine. In the last years before his premature death, when I was at the height of my unbelief, I felt during my discussions with my father that even his "blind faith" had not remained quite unscathed under the pressure of rationalistic currents.

My mother had no such doubts - till the end of her life she retained untouched the faith and the concept of the world which she inherited from her parents. My mother was a woman of the old fiber, strong in spirit, her convictions unshaken by doubts. She was true to my father and his devoted partner in their joint efforts to raise the children and obtain material well-being for the family. She was a so-called brood-hen i.e. she gave all her time and efforts to her family, with the interests of which she lived and in which she found her life's meaning. In contrast to my father who was unnerved at times of the children's dangerous illnesses, she preserved her self-control and did all that was necessary; one summer during a fire on the dacha she even displayed great courage. We lived on the second floor and, even though the roof was already burning over her head, deaf to the wails of us children who entreated her to save herself, she did not join us downstairs until she had thrown all our belongings from the balcony. A long time after my father's death and being of an advanced age, my mother, discovering upon her return home that a burglar was rummaging in her bedroom dresser, grabbed him and, with a fearlessnes unusual in the weaker sex, did not let go until a policemen, whom the neighbours had summoned upon her shouts, ran in. My mother was a good housewife, able to cut out and sew clothes; in the first, financially difficult years of her marriage she sewed the clothes for the children herself, and until deep old age she was an excellent knitter. We still treasure the miraculously preserved lovely table cloth knitted by her. Her personality can be discerned in part by the fact that she devotedly cared for the ailing grandfather Gershon when he lived with us and as a mother-in-law she was kind and just to her sons and daughters-in-law, for which she was loved by them. In my early years I was very strongly attached to my mother and separations from her were fraught with great pain. Because of very painful kidney stone attacks mother went for ten years in a row for treatments to Karlsbad, (now Czecholovakia) upon advice of German professors and usually took one of her daughters with her.

I remember well that in 1907, when I was already a boy of ten, I missed my mother terribly and was counting hours till her return from Karlsbad while spending the summer in the country, in a place named Belmont.

The whole family usually spent the summer at a dacha, which would be rented in a locality adjoining the city, so that father could come there daily. During the following several years, 1908-1910, we spent the summers in Pospeshki, the country place which sprung up on the land of the rich landowner Alexandrowicz, which stretched to the north of the city for 10-15 kilometers along the bank of the Wilja river. The enormous sums netted by Alexandrowicz from the sale of hundreds of parcels of land adjoining the city and from the sale of timber for logging, he spent to the last copeck on all kinds of wild extravagances. The main object of the enthusiasms and worries of Alexandrowicz were his race horses. He donated an enormous field to the Wilno Racing Society; competitions took place on it with the participation of the military personnel, predominantly horse races with obstacles.

The windows of our dacha in Pospeshki faced a field which belonged to Alexandrowicz and from the windows I could observe how each year the workers of Alexandrowicz came to plow the field, sow rye, reap it and then leave it in the end unharvested to rot in the field. When those around him, among them the father of my wife who often bought timber for felling from him, would remind him of the unharvested rye, he would answer that he did not have time for this.

The doings of the landowner Alexandrowicz were not unique, since mismanagement and foolish extravagance were frequent occurences among the Polish gentry. The landowner Kotwicz had senselessly squandered the property on which was raised the little town of Michaliszki, the birth-place of my father, as well as two other properties.

The landowner Zygmunt Chominski, owner of the large estate Dobrolany - to him went also all the three estates of the wastrel Kotwicz - would drive about the city of Wilno scattering handfuls of silver five-zloty pieces but at the same time refused to pay taxes to the Polish government.

In order to save from the prodigality of his heirs at least a part of the huge fortune of the landowner Gilyary Lensky (a huge complex of houses which was visible from the windows of our apartment in Wilno), a court trustee had to be appointed over the property. The estate of Luban, one of very largest forests in the Wilno River Basin, where in the course of an entire hundred years the Sheniuks, beginning with my great-grandfather Leyser, yearly bought for felling timber in the hundreds of thousands, was lost at cards by its owner, the landowner Lubansky, to Krakow, another landowner.

As we know from history, the irresponsible activities of the Polish-Lithuanian gentry had also complicated the geopolitical situation of Poland in the eighteenth century, even without this a difficult one, hastening the complete loss of its independence.

A feeling of responsibility toward their people and to history was also alien to the Polish-Lithuanian gentry in my time, - i.e. the first half of the current century. Posessing on one hand theoretical knowlwdge - almost every Polish nobleman was a university graduate - and on the other hand enormous monetary resources from their huge estates, (which they contrived to preserve until the very end of the Second World War), the Polish gentry did absolutely nothing to facilitate the developemnt of the productive forces of the country, so neccessary, considering the population growth, in order to ward off the impoverishment of the masses. In many cases the gentry actually seemed to bid defiance to the rest of the population with their wild extravagance and criminal prodigality.

Analyzing the class relations of that time, a question arises of its own accord as to why did the people endure without a murmur their extreme impoverishment, forgave their gentry its sterile role - and in all this time did

not bring forth their avengers - their Muenzers, Razins and Pugachevs? Why did the people, instead of this, direct their political hatred against the Jews, who with their creative initiative and energy created literally all with what the city, and in part the villages, lived?
We will find a partial answer to these questions in the role of the Catholic church, which was an obedient weapon in the hands of the Polish gentry and helped it hold the people to obedience. I will return to the reasons for the second aspect of popular anti-Semitism when I touch upon that period in my life when the interrelations between Jews and their Christian neighbours reached a tragic denouement for the Jews.

Returning to the times when we would spend our summers in Pospeshki, this was the period of conquest of the air by man; I remember how, in the summer of 1908 the pioneer aviator Utochkin demonstrated for the first time in Wilno the flight in an airplane on the race track before a crowd of many thousands. He managed to rise to the height of fifteen-twenty meters and fly about a kilometer, arousing an indescribable enthusiasm of the crowd. The succeeding pioneers, [30] were already able to circle over the race track for about half an hour.

Because of the role which they would play later in our lives, I wish to dedicate several lines to the Pruzhan family who for a number of years lived in Pospeshki as we did, and stayed at a nearby dacha. In addition to the parents, this family was composed of a daughter Nyuta, of the same age as our Emma and the sons Misha, my age, and Ilyusha, two-three years younger with whom David and I played football constantly. Undoubtedly the outstanding personality in that family was the mother; coming from a poor family, she managed to raise herself through her own efforts above the environment from which she came. Having lost her husband early, she managed to expand and improve the perfumery business and along with this to create a beautiful home. I first met Ilya Grigorevich Sedlis at the Pruzhan's dacha. We all gathered there to listen to his readings of the works of the Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem. Ilya Grigorevich was born in the small town of Shervinta, situated not far from Wilno. In Wilno he graduated from the governmental Jewish Teaching Institute, which was preparing cadres of teachers for Jewish elementary schools with Russian as the language of instruction; when I first met him he was studying medicine in Leipzig. Spending the summer holidays as boarder at the Pruzhan's, he grew close to Nyuta, whom he later married. After the First World War Ilya Gregorovich practiced as a gynecologist and obstetrician in Wilno and as such delivered our daughter Perella. Unusually for a young, beginning physician, he acquired early a large practice and the reputation of a good doctor and administrator. Much later, when imprisoned in the ghetto, the Jewish community entrusted to Doctor Sedlis the task of organizing and managing the Jewish Hospital there. We did not get to be closely acquainted with his wife Nyuta, who did not survive the Hitlerian cataclysm, but I know that she was loved by her girl friends, who praised her character. Our friendship with Doctor Sedlis and his family began only after the Second World War, in faraway Italy. Doctor Sedlis was a man of wide erudition and a multifaceted sphere of interests.
As the head of refugee organisations in Italy - one of Jewish physicians, the other of people from Wilno, he was a person of uncompromising moral principles. A devoted son of his people, he was not blind to their shortcomings, but along with that was proud of the enormous Jewish

---

[30] the Frenchman Campo de Scipio in a monoplane of the Blerio type and Gaber Vlynsky in a Farman biplane,

contribution to the developement of the world of ideas and to the Western Judeo-Christian culture. I will return to Doctor Sedlis when I touch upon the beginning of our life in the United States.

My friend Alosha Perevozki, whose father was a member of our synagogue, I met there at the age of three - thus began our close friendship which was to continue for forty-three years, until the deaths of Alosha and of his wife and son during the Hitlerite occupation. We were friends as families with the Perevozkis, on holidays the parents would go to visit one another. The elder sisters of Alosha, Polya and Riveka (Rivtsya) were of the same age and friends of my sisters Emma and Anya. Alosha's mother, Eva Matveyevna, came from the wealthy Mushkat family. Her brothers were people of higher education still in the last century. Eva was still attending a Russian gymnasium when Alosha's father, the son of a tavern keeper from Antokol, carried her off and married her, to the great horror of her family. The father of Alosha owned a warehouse of lumber materials on the other side of the Wilja. All the lumber sawed by him he bought from my father.

The family Perevozki led the life of prosperous, I would even say wealthy, people; in addition to servants they also employed teachers-governesses for the seven children (one of these - Gessa Isaacovna - married the brother of Eva Matveyevna, Doctor Alexander Mushkat). The relationship between our parents was interrupted when Alosha's father, a very hardworking man but an exceptionally lavish spender, went bankrupt in 1911, remaining 8,000 in debt to my father - a sum he never returned. The Perevozkis were saved from poverty and the consequences of multiple financial catastrophes by large inheritances after the deaths of members of the family of Eva Matveyevna - of her father in 1912 and in 1925 of her millionaire engineer brother, Solomon Mushkat in Riga. The fact, characteristic partially of the times, partially of the temperament of my father, remains - because of past friendship, my father never attempted to recover the sum owed him, even after the fortunes of the Perevozkis were mended.

Complications of a monetary character did not disturb my friendship with Alosha, David and I continued to visit him - their enormous courtyard, filled with layers of logs and boards was an ideal place for our childish games. Though being only two months older, Alosha was a whole grade ahead of me in the gymnasium. He studied diligently and well, read a lot and even tried to write verses. As we grew, discussions would replace our childish games. At the age of seventeen, in 1914, Alosha graduated from the second public gymnasium and enrolled at the medical department of the private Psycho-Neurological Institute in Petrograd. Drafted through a special draft during the war in 1916, he served in Tsarytsin in a student battalion consisting of Jewish students who had no access to military academies, (another Jewish student battalion was located then in Starye Russy).

Another comrade of my childhood was Kolya, who lived in the same house we did; Kolya was my age, the son of my mother's cousin, Lazar Shenyuk. In 1910 they moved to a new apartment possessing every convenience on Georgevsky Prospect - the main street of the city - and we moved to their old one. The father of Lazar, Kasriel Shenyuk, the brother of my grandmother Mera, built up the timber business inherited by him from his father and became very wealthy. His daughter Keylya, later married to Steinberg, was a bosom friend of my mother. My father was especially close, personally as well as in business, to two of Kasriel's four sons - Aaron and Lazar, the owners of the house in which we lived. The wife of Aaron, Rosa Ilinishna, was from the small town Shchedrin and came from the family of Golodtsy (now multi-millionaires in the United States). Aaron was head of the timber firm of Shenyuk and Regoler (a brother-in-law), one of the very largest in Wilno, and also the hereditary elder of our synagogue.

In 1908 Aaron died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of forty-two. I remember that my father took his death very keenly to heart. Aaron's only son, Kolya "the big" (in distinction from Lazar's Kolya, whom we called "the little"), received then, at the age of fourteen, an enormous inheritance (in the concept of those times) - around 150,000 rubles. This money did him no good since, feeling himself to be fully secure financially, Kolya dropped out of the last grade of the gymnasium and began to travel without completing his secondary education. In a letter to my sister Anya, with whom he was in love, Kolya "the big" described his visit at the estate Lyalichy, with its enormous palace of several hundred rooms. This estate had been given by the Empress Catherine the Great to her favorite, Count Zavadovsky, from whose heirs the Golodtsy, Kolya's relatives on his mother's side, bought it along with the surrounding forests. The "big" Kolya had an exceptional memory and brilliant language abilities. From childhood on he spent all summers at resorts abroad and the war found him there in 1914. In the first years of the war he resided in Copenhagen and Stockholm and then until 1922 in London; as a result he acquired the countenance and manners of a man of the wide world, spoke a half dozen European languages well and was an exceptionally fascinating conversationalist. In 1915 Kolya, while abroad, married Marya Markovna Isserlin from Wilno. The Isserlins owned a phonograph factory in Wilno and a very big business trading in pharmaceuticals, with branches in Kharkov and Odessa. During the war they made many millions of rubles on foreign products, sent to them by Kolya from abroad. To be sure, not much remained of these millions after their business was nationalized by the Bolsheviks.

In 1924, returning home to Wilno from Germany, I found there "Big Kolya" who with his wife had also returned there from the wide world; we became close friends. The difference in age did not matter as much as it did in childhood and we were inseparable right up to my marriage.

However, by the will of fate - family ties, the same age, living in the same house and at the same dacha in the summer, the closest comrade of my early years had been Kolya "the little". His father, Lazar Kasrilevich Shenyuk married in 1895 Clara Ezekielevna Zakheim from Kartuz Berezy, receiving 20,000 rubles as her dowry. In addition Lazar soon received 40,000 rubles as an inheritance upon the death of Clara's father.

From this marriage were born: a son Kolya in 1897, a daughter Nina in 1900 and a daughter Elena in 1904. Lazar K., always spic-and-span, with the appearance of an English lord, was in addition a man with commercial initiative. Being a participant, along with his brothers, in timber exploitation (in Luban and in Stary Selo around Minsk) and the owner of half the house in which we lived, Lazar built in cooperation with my father on the bank of the Wilya river the largest sawmill in Wilno, which brought him tens of thousands of rubles in yearly profit (50,000 in 1913 alone). Lazar's family lived in a wealthy manner, rented an expensive apartment on the main street of the city, had their own carriage and coachman and, in addition to the dacha, in the summers often traveled abroad. Clara Ezekielevna, an intelligent woman, was by nature a brood hen: a devoted wife and loving mother. Her excessive love for her firstborn had, unfortunately, lamentable results, for "little" Kolya was wicked as only a spoiled son of very rich parents can be. Fate endowed "little" Kolya generously in childhood - with the limitless love of his parents, especially of his mother, who fulfilled his every whim, good looks (though marred by stoutness in childhood), a sharp, lively mind, a good memory, an excellent sense of humor - and in addition wealth too.

Fate did not give him one thing, however : the ability to control his extravagant whims, of which he had an abundance - more than enough. In childhood I frequently witnessed stormy scenes between Kolya and his parents, when he would hurt them with more than just words. Once, when at the gymnasium Kola was sent to the punishment room, he broke an icon hanging on the wall in a fit of rage - when poor Lazar K. was informed of this late at night, he immediately rushed, not sparing any expense, to seek an icon to replace the broken one with, in order to try to suppress the whole incident and preserve his son from heavy punishment for sacrilege.

Friendship between us was possible only because I was physically stronger than he was. As we were growing up, we would go out together on Saturdays with our high school girls - the ladies of our hearts. At first we would go to the cinema, then take them riding in horse-cabs with inflated tires. In the cinemas, besides films there would appear also the touring so-called "kupletists" (singers of topical, satirical songs.) [31] Kolya and I enjoyed the kupletists very much and, buying their librettos, zealously studied their soliloquies in order to recite them with feeling to our ladies. In connection with this I recall a comical episode at our house. It was supper time and all of us children sat at the table, mama pouring tea from the samovar boiling on the table. It was very lively, and, in addition I, holding in my hand the libretto of a kupletist, was reciting one of his soliliquies at the top of my voice. Unable to stand my noise, mama entreated me to quiet down and when this did not help, she tore the libretto from my hands and stuck it into the pipe of the samovar, where the fire consumed it.

I began to be interested in high-school girls in the sixth grade and, since in the male gymnasiums the school day began and ended an hour earlier than in the female ones, I had enough time daily to come home from school and eat the cutlets prepared especially for me by the cook - (dinner at our house was eaten after my sisters and David arrived at four o'clock), then hurry to the Georgievski Prospect in order to meet the female pupils returning from the Prozorova and Marinskaya gymnasiums.

Addressing my later years in the Gymnasium and touching upon the behavior, customs and moods of the students, I should admit that we boys used terribly foul language in our conversations, many of us secretly bought cigarettes, drank vodka at parties and the majority of us frequented brothels. Prostitution was legal in Russia. The police issued prostitutes a so-called "yellow card", which allowed them to engage in their profession (in brothels as well as privately), but at the same time obliged them to appear for periodic medical examinations. Promenading along Georgievsky Prospect, the main street of our city, the prostitutes were therefore an every-day phenomenon for us. Pressured by my friends, at the age of seventeen I went with them to a prostitute for the first time. For me this was a far from pleasant experience for which I paid with a sleepless night and several days of depression.

All the children of our family had a good ear for music and loved music and singing. Among my sister's girl friends there were some wonderful pianists who often played at our house; thus from my earliest years on I had frequently the opportuniy to listen to classical music - Beethoven, Chopin, Rachmaninoff and others - in a good rendition. Deprived of the chance (because of the extra school supervision) of going out during the evenings and not having any other means of discharging my energy, at home I pestered everyone, especially my sisters.

Since at home we all loved singing, there was no new romantic song which missed being performed at our house. All the children sang well - except for myself. For some reason these talents were not recognized in me by my family and when I would begin to sing they would ask me to postpone my performance until it was neccessary to drive off the guests who had stayed too long. When I grew up, I was at first greatly astonished when I would be asked to sing - to my surprise there were actually quite a few among my acquaintances who enjoyed my singing.

---

[31] Vasily Pravdin, Gregory Marmeladov and others.

The last several summers before the war - beginning in 1911 - were spent by us in the country place "Zakret" with the family of Lazar Sheniuk. The dachas in "Zakret" adjoined the imperial estate of that name, with its dry, centuries old pine forest stretching for hundreds of desyatins (2.7 acres) extending to the bank of the Wilya river, where we would go to swim. This forest was fenced off on all sides, a fee was levied at the entrance for the use of it - dacha residents bought season tickets. On the same shore was located the poorly preserved palace where, according to stories, Emperor Alexander I was informed, during a ball, that the "Grand Armee" of Napoleon had crossed the Niemen in its march on Moscow. The Shenyuks' dacha was located across from ours and during all this time it was shared by the Baltermants family. Yakov Baltermants, by then already retired, was at one time the owner of the biggest bank in Wilno. It was in the bank of Yakov Baltermants that the subsequently renowned Wilno banker Israel Bunimowicz began his banking career as an errand boy. The Baltermants family was numerous - they had a daughter in St. Petersburg, married to Gregory Russota (co-owner of the Shereshevskaya tobacco factory in Grodno), two daughters in Kiev, one married to the lawyer Volkenstein, the other to the renowned ladies-man Lelya Konigsberg, and one in Warsaw, married to a certain Slutsky. In addition they had two sons in St Ptersburg - a journalist and a dentist. The third, Nicholas Yakovlevich or, as his relatives called him - Noska, lived with his parents in Wilno and, in the summer, in Zakret.

Nicholas Ya. was already in his thirties when we became acquainted. Even though he was educated, eloquent, witty and had good looks and manners, it seemed that he could not find his place in the world.

Nicholas Ya. had graduated from Law School at one time and, even though a Jew, managed to serve his military obligation in the prestigious Pavlogradsky Leib Hussar regiment; judging by the briefcase filled with letters and photographs which, leaving for the war, he left with my sisters, he enjoyed great success with women and was once married. I do not know the reason why he had divorced his wife, did not become a lawyer and why, having all the essential qualities for making a successful career he "went astray" - became a frequent visitor of "Shuman", (a cabaret well known in the North-Western region) and was financially dependent on his parents. For my part I can only say that I think today of our summer life in Zakret as of one of the happiest and most carefree periods of my youth and that Nicholas Ya. had no small merit in this. The Baltermants were visited every summer by their grandchildren who gathered from all parts of Russia. From Petrograd came Sarra, the daughter of the dentist son and Nellie Russoto, a poetess; in 1912 came Musya and Lilya Slutski from Warsaw, having just suffered the premature death of their mother; and in 1913 came the beautiful granddaughters Raya and Nadya Kenigsberg from Kiev. Nadya had a pleasant conralto and performed with great feeling the Kiev romantic songs "I remember the day", "From beyond the island" (Stenka Razin) and "Bold Khaz Bulat". Kolya and I were not indifferent to her, but Kolya soon began courting Raya and made it no secret that he was greatly taken by her. During all those years Nicholas Ya. was the soul of our group. He organized all kinds of undertakings and as a talented storyteller he entertained us with various funny stories, especially during the period when he tried to help his Slutsky nieces endure their terrible loss. He was frequently visited by his former

fellow student, the associate barrister Gregory Lvovich Goldman, along with Abram Pavlovich Jedwabnik (the elder brother of the Doctor, subsequently exporter of flax from Latvia and a great millionaire, an old confirmed bachelor even then). We would all go into the woods where there was no end to stories and jokes.
Of the doings organized by Nicholas Ya., the "Sitting of the Court", which he, as chairman, conducted according to all the binding rules of legal procedure, sticks in my mind. According to the prepared by him "Accusatory Act" read by the Secretary of the Court, on the windowsill of the Shenyuk dacha was found a corpse of a fly of the female sex, with signs of rape by violence. Accused of this crime was the boy Gavrushka Krever (an often uninvited visitor of all our verandas). The major role in this enterprise, besides that of Nicholas Ya. were held, as far as I can recollect, by: the "Big" Kolya as prosecutor, Musya Slutskaya (a charming, fairhaired and fragile girl of my age) as the defender, our Emma as the foreman of the jury, the Slutsky father as the bailiff and myself as the accusing witness. Gavryushka was found guilty and by sentence of the court deprived of the right to visit other people's verandas for two weeks.

At the beginning of July, 1913, my mother, my sister Anya and I went to Germany, first stopping over in Konigsberg. At the same time Yefim left for treatment of his rheumatic fever and to take the mud baths of Ciechocinek - at the dacha remained only papa with Emma and David. I had already mentioned previously that the year before I had fallen ill with myocarditis. As far as I know, this came about as follows: Lenya Semenov, a classmate of mine who shared my class bench, was the strongest in the class and the best football (soccer) player in the city. Since in our snowball games I always was very daring, Lenya chose me as his partner when in the spring of 1912 he challenged the whole gymnasium to a snowball fight - we two against them all. After a stubborn struggle we manged to put the whole crowd to flight, but I was wet through, all covered with snow and chilled. As a result I fell dangerously ill with an acute inflammation of the heart muscle, with strong palpitations and enlargement of the heart. My father's agitation reached its peak when my pulse suddenly fell to forty-eight - he insisted that our physician, Doctor Rosenkrants, should arrange an immediate consultation with Doctor Shabad, an authority in internal medicine. Apparently this was a turning point for the better in my illness, but upon the doctor's orders I had to stay in bed without moving for a whole month. I speedily recovered from my illness, but was forbidden by the physicians to engage in sports.

Next year my parents had decided that, since I had been ill, they would take me to Konigsberg for consultation with Professor Joachim. German medicine stood then at the zenith of its glory, especially for Russian Jews - every summer they filled the waiting rooms of German professors in Konigsberg and Berlin. Every year before going to Karlsbad, my mother would also go to consult with either Professor Lichtheim in Konigsberg or Professor Mendel in Berlin. My sister Anya had to have her tonsils removed and Professor Kafeman performed the procedure during our stay in Konigsberg. Professor Joachim prescribed mineral baths in the South Silesian resort of Reynerz for me, we went there after staying a few days at the seashore resort Krantz near Konigsberg. We stayed in Reynerz for about four weeks. Of people from Wilno we met there the family of Doctor Globus, a popular dermatologist, his ailing wife and his daughters Zhenya and Lida (I don't remeber the youngest, Tanya). From the picturesquely situated Raynherz we would go to the nearby resorts of [32] and across the Austrian border to the Czech city of Nakhod. After I had undergone the course of treatment prescribed for me by Professor Joachim, on our way home we stopped in Breslau where we visited the centenary Napoleonic wars exposition taking place there. At the exposition there were many exhibits related to that period, among them the carriage used by Napoleon. A monument in Leipzig memorialized the "Battle of the Nations" which took place near Leipzig in 1813, and put an end to Napoleon's dominion of Europe. Remembering what impressed me in the city of Breslau, I have to point to the antique, classic, filigreed City Hall. I was also amazed at the dimensions of the never before seen by me department store of the brothers Barash and at the statue of a man holding a globe in his hands which stood on its roof.

Life in Germany of that time breathed of cleanliness and order and everything spoke of the well-being and the relatively high standard of living of its population.

Immediately after our return from Reynerz in September of 1913, my sister Anya departed for Paris. In connection with the departure of our Anya, I recall a joke told upon this occasion by "Little" Kolya.

Kasriel Sheniuk, the brother of my grandmother Mera, besides Aaron and Lazar, of whom I spoke before, had two other sons - Samuel and Israel. All four brothers, together with a brother-in-law, Samuel Rigoler, owned "Sheynyuks and Rigoler", one of the biggest timber businesses in Wilno, and were very well-to-do. Clara, the only daughter of the oldest brother Israel, went to study in Paris a year or two earlier and, by the time of Anya's departure, had already managed to return with a husband, a native of Odessa, Grisha Tsimbal (in Russian cymbal), whom she had met in Paris. "Anya, said Kolya in parting, Godspeed, only one condition: please don't return with a double-bass". Incidentally, the marriage of Clara with Grisha Tsimbal turned out very unhappilly - the character of Grisha Tsimbal corresponded in general with his last name. He abandoned Clara when they already had a son, as soon as the Sheynyuks were ruined by the Bolshevik coup. I met Grisha Tsimbal for the last time in the fall of 1918 in the Ukraine. He then passed himself off as an Ukrainian colonel and wore the uniform of one. The Ukraine was then under German occupation and was controlled by the Ukrainian Hetman Skoropadsky.

The romance I mentioned between our Anya and "Big" Kolya came to nothing, since his aunt, Clara Ezekielevna, the wife of Lazar, opposed the marriage. In our family it was asserted that she wished to keep "Big"Kolya, a highly eligible bachelor by reason of his large inheritance, for her eldest daughter Nina, at that time still a thirteen-year-old girl. As my sister assured me, she parted easily from Kolya, since she felt for him nothing more than liking. But this incident had still other, serious, consequences.

At the same time the nephew of Clara Ezekielevna, the dentist Yakov Naumovich Shokhor, courted my sister Emma and Clara E. very much wanted for them to marry. I should add that our Emma was also agreeable.

My father however, fiercely offended for our Anya, opposed this marriage under the pretext that Yakov Naumovich was ten years older than Emma. He proposed to Emma that she should also go to Paris, she agreed gladly and went there in October of 1913.

Upon my return from Germany I found in Zakret Kolya, who during my absence managed also to visit abroad - he had gone to the resort Ragats in Switzerland. He went there with Big Kolya and his mother. I remember an amusing story about this: before his departure Kolya entrusted Gavriushka with seeing to it that his beloved Raya should not be unfaithful. During the time of Kolya's absence, the presence of the beautiful Konigsberg sisters began to attract to Zakret the so-called golden youth from the city and one of them, the medical student Grisha Hochstein started to court Raya and, what was worse, was successful in his courtship. Gavriushka did not delay in informing Kolya of this circumstance and the latter, abandoning everybody and everything, even his suitcases, rushed from Ragats in order to save the situation. Raya did not return to Kolya, however and until the end of the dacha season he poured his ailing soul out to me. Kolya's and my roads separated when Kolya was expelled from the fifth grade of the gymnasium, his good abilities notwithstanding, and his passion for girls lost their former innocent character - he got involved with a chanteuse from the local cabaret, Tanya Slavina. Kolya the little was legally married three times; he died in the Warsaw Ghetto.

---

[32] Kudova, Landek, Altheide

Moving to the description of the conditions in the country in the pre-revolutionary period, I should admit that during the premiership of Stolypin, along with the strengthening of authority came a certain tranquility.
Turning to the major events of a political character within the country in the period preceding the First World War, my thoughts turn to the Beylis affair and the murder of the Premier P.A. Stolypin. As mentioned previously, the governmental anti-Jewish policies became more drastic after the '05 revolution. The trial accusing the Jew Mendel Beylis of ritual murder, organized by the Ministry of Justice, headed by the Minister Shcheglovitov, was the most important of the acts stemming from this, both by its own significance and its menacing consequences as well as of the publicity and responses to it within the country and throughout the world.

In Kiev in 1911, at the brick factory of the Jew Zaytsev of which Beyliss was manager, a corpse was found of a Christian boy, Andrey Yushchinsky; there were signs that the murder was perpetrated with the intent of using the blood of the victim for special purposes.
Mendel Beyliss, arrested in connection with this murder, was accused by the authorities of killing the Yushchinsky boy to use his blood for the baking of matzoh, supposedly according to the demands of Judaic religious ritual.

In the history of Jewish martyrdom the so-called "Blood Libel" was the favorite means, beginning as long ago as the early Middle Ages, to which the bourgeoisie resorted in search of justification for bloody pogroms and demands to the authorities for the banishment of the hated Jews. Of the "Blood Libel" trials against Jews, the trial in 1840 in Damascus (then under Turkish domination) was accorded particular fame. In order to free innocent Jews from prison, the personal intervention of the leaders of the European Jewry was required; Moshe Montefiore from England and Adolf Cremieux from France had travelled to Damascus.

A peculiarity which extraordinarily deepened the significance of the Beylis trial was the fact that this time the "Blood Libel" was organized by the government of an enormous and powerful Empire. In the hands of the Russian Empire lay the fate of five and a half million Jews and it apparently sought justification before the world for new bloody pogroms and persecutions. Simultaneously with the agitation of the Beylis trial began the pogromist speeches of the members of the faction of "extreme rightists",[33] and intense anti-Jewish propaganda of the "Black Hundred" organizations from the tribunal of the Government Duma.

---

[33] with Purishkevitch from Bessarabia and Markovy Vtoroy from the Kurskaya at the head

The Russian liberal community as well as the whole liberal press rose unanimously to the defence of Jews with a protest against the government's resurrection of methods from the Dark Ages.
The Moscow "Russkoye Slovo" printed a statement of the German Emperor, transmitted by his secretary to the newspaper's correspondent, Trotsky, saying that he personally did not believe that the Jews use the blood of Christians for ritual purposes. In Kiev itself, not only the liberal "Kievskaya Mysl", but even the "Kievyanin", a newspaper of a nationalist slant (the publisher of which was a certain Pikhno, the father-in-law of Shulgin, the leader of the nationalist faction in the "Government Duma"), also came out in defense of the Jews.

But decisive was the redeeming circumstance that the fate of Beylis - and with him of the whole Russian Jewry, was to be decided in a court which, with the judicial reforms of the liberal Czar Alexander II, was created on democratic principles which would guarantee justice. This was an open court, with "glasnost" - the speeches of the defenders were not subjected to a censor and could be printed in all newspapers, where along with a prosecutor there was also a defender; this was also an independent court, for the fate of the accused lay in the hands of jurors who were selected from all strata of the population.

The trial of Beylis, which was initiated in 1913 in the Circuit Court of Kiev under the chairmanship of Boldyrev, was carefully prepared by the government. The prosecution, besides the state's attorney Vipper, was augmented by the two lawyers [34] supporting the civil action of the step-mother of the murdered boy, Vera Cheberiak (Zamyslovsky was a member of the faction of extreme rightists in the Government Duma, a deputy from Wilno). A specialist, an "expert on the Talmud", whose opinion conformed with the notion of the prosecution that Judaic ritual demanded the use of Christian blood had to be unearthed in distant Turkestan in the person of the Catholic priest Pranaytis. The defense of Beylis lay in the hands of six famous lawyers, two Jews and four Christians [35] N.P. Korabchevsky, a leading figure of the Russian legal profession, was one of the most brilliant criminal defenders in Russia. V.A. Maklakov, brother of the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs and himself a member of the Government Duma (Kadet party) was nicknamed "silver tongue" for his eloquence. Oscar Osipovich Gruzenberg was, undisputably, the first among Jewish criminal lawyers by virtue of his abilities and devotion to his people. There was not a single trial where the interests of the Russian Jewry were concerned, to which Gruzenberg did not contribute his brilliant abilities and eloquence - and also his soul.

When in Wilno the Jew Blondes was accused in 1900 (and originally convicted) of wounding his Christian servant in order to use her blood for ritual purposes, it was Gruzenberg who, together with the famous Russian lawyer V. Spasovich, obtained Blondes's acquittal. Gruzenberg was also at his post in the trial of Beylis, an event decisive in the fate of Russian Jewry.
Like all of Russian Jewry, we in Wilno barely breathed following the course of the trial in Kiev. In the absence of radio, the newspapers were the only source of news and, in the Beylis affair, the stenographic accounts of the "Kievskaya Mysl".

I recall how crowds of Wilno Jews awaited at the railroad station the arrival of the express train from Kiev which, on the way to St.Petersburg, arrived in Wilno at midnight, bringing copies of the "Kievskaya Mysl". I also remember how we read these accounts aloud in a circle and commented on the significance for the outcome of the trial of the testimony of the Chiefs of Police Kulyabka and Krasnovsky and also of the witnesses - among them the testimony before the court of the main witness for the prosecution, Vera Cheberyak, the step-mother of the murdered boy.

---

[34] Shmakovy and Gregory Zamyslovsky
[35] Margolin, Gruzenberg and Zarudny, Grigorovich-Barsky, Karabchevsky, Maklakov

Besides the priest Pranaytis, the court heard the opinions of some genuine experts on the Talmud and the Judaic religious ceremonies: the Moscow rabbi Maze and the academician Troitsky demolished the "expertise" of Pranaytis.

The hopes which, as was later revealed, the Ministry of Justice placed on the fact that most of the jurors were ignorant, did not come to fruition, as we well know. Beylis was acquitted by a majority of the votes of the jurors.

As was later understood from the words of the jurors, the defender V.A. Maklakov was the one that saved Beylis. They did not understand Karabchevsky and they did not trust Gruzenberg (whose speech lasted six hours) because he was a Jew. Maklakov convinced them of the innocence of Beylis after he pointed out and dwelled at length on the unnatural and strange behavior of Vera Cheberyak.

To the honor of the Russian legal profession it should be noted that their best representatives took part in the defense of Beylis; in addition, several days before the acquittal of Beylis, at a meeting of the Council of Barristers of the St Petersburg district, in an unanimously accepted resolution the Council accused the government of resorting to means which covered all Russia with shame in its desire to arouse universal hatred toward the Jews.

The active sympathy of the Russian intelligentsia supported Jews greatly in these difficult days, but none other than Czar Nicholas II himself supported and even inspired Minister of Justice Shcheglovitov in his criminal work, as disclosed by informed sources. This indicated that much hardship still lay ahead, that the problems of Russian Jewry were far from resolved with the acquittal of Baylis.

The Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Peter Arkdevich Stolypin, was killed in 1911 by Dimitry Bogrovy in the city of Kiev during a theatre performance, in the presence of the Czar.

The following facts clearly indicate that the hand of the all-powerful "Okhrana"[36] was involved in the murder of Stolypin:

Bogrov, as it was later revealed, was a secret agent of the Security Section; the hand of the murderer was directed not against the Czar, who sat in the next loge stall, but against Stolypin;

Stolypin was, for unknown reasons, deprived of his usual guard;

Bogrov was strictly isolated and executed with unusual speed.

Popular rumor pointed at General Kurlov, (then the Vice Minister of Internal Affairs, in charge of the Police Department) as the contriver of the murder. Kurlov, as I remember well, acquired his first dismal renown as early as the revolution of 1905, when he, as the Governor of the Minsk Province ordered shooting into a crowd at the railroad station of the city of Minsk.

I consider it appropriate to dwell at more length on a phenomenon which placed its strong imprint on political events within the country and is known in history under the sobriquet "Okhrana". The distinguishing feature of the "Okhrana" during the reign of Nicholas II was that it, in addition to the usual betrayers-informers, also widely employed provocateurs who organized and in many cases themselves committed crimes the victims of which were people devoted to the Russian Monarchy. Analyzing the activities of the "Okhrana" in its last period one finds a striking resemblance of its methods to those of the epoch of Stalin.

Both these epochs are characterized by boundless immorality, by betrayal brought to its utmost perfection, provocative acts committed by agents in order

---

[36] Security Section - Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

to justify the subsequent criminal repressions against the innocent, mass murders - among them those of the regime's former faithful servants.
But even though it is impossible to find even the slightest justification for the crimes of Stalin, from the point of view of attainment of his personal criminal goals it is possible to find at least an explanation for them and understand how they made sense from his monstruous point of view:
the murder of Kirov and Trotsky - Stalin wanted to eliminate possible rivals;
the so-called "Show Trials" - he wanted to find a scapegoat for the economic failures and the catastrophic consequences of collectivization;
the purges and Red Terror - his plan to convert the people into a silent, submissive and unquestioningly obedient mass by depriving them of their intellectual, thinking leaders;
the execution of his main butchers, Yagoda and Yezhov - he wanted to pin the blame on them for the monstrous crimes committed on his order.

But if, after analyzing the crimes of Stalin, it is not difficult to find his motives for them, it is extremely difficult to do so by analyzing the criminal acts of the Czarist governments of the epoch of the "Okhrana".
It might be possible to explain the murder of the Yuschinsky boy and the launching of the trial against Beylis with the Czar's desire to find justification before the world for anti-Jewish pogroms and persecutions;
an explanation is hard to find for a number of additional monstruous deeds of the "Okhrana": the series of murders and attempts connected with the provocateur (double agent) Yevno Azef, the murder of Stolypin and the "The 9th of January" - just to enumerate the main ones.
What kind of sense is it possible to find in the latter: the "Okhrana", by the hand of its agent, the priest Gapon, organized on the 9th of January, 1905, a peaceful procession of St Petersburg workers and their wives and children to the Winter Palace; they went with icons and portraits of the Czar in their hands, wanting to hand the Czar a petition, but were met by rifle volleys and were fired upon in pursuit when they tried to run away from the trap.

This blood bath organized by the Czarist government of which several hundreds of innocent men, women and children fell victim, called forth indignation throughout the world. Within the country, as previously mentioned, the January killings provoked a revolution with open uprisings, which compelled the Czar to limit his power with the Manifesto of October 17th, 1905, i.e. to do what the Russian absolute rulers had, in the course of decades, categorically refused to do.
The priest Gapon was lured by Russian revolutionaries to a secluded dacha in Finland, where he was hanged by Pinkus Rutenberg; the latter later became known for his work on the electrification of Israel. The "Okhrana" had in its pay Yevno Azef, the head of the fighting organization of the Social Revolutionary party which organized the majority of terrorist acts.

It is thus hard to understand why the "Okhrana" did not stay the hands of the terrorists Sazonov and Kalyaev who killed the leaders of the regime, the Minister of Internal Affairs Von Plehve and the Grand Duke Sergey Aleksandrovich, the uncle of the Czar and Governor General of Moscow.
Why did Azef participate personally in attempts on people deeply devoted to the regime, among them the General Governor of Moscow, General Dubasov, who survived only because the bomb tossed at him did not explode? Dubasov, one should note, played an important role in the crucial for the regime turning point of the 1905 revolution; he suppressed the armed uprising at Presna in December of that year with the help of the Semenovsky Guard Regiment which, led by Colonel Min, had come on foot from St. Petersburg.

I have already dwelled at some length on the puzzling circumstances of the murder by the member of the "Okhrana" Bogrov of Premier Stolypin who was, like Witte, a statesman of high caliber, to whom the Czarist regime was very much indebted. The fact that Stolypin had told Guchkov, leader of the Octobrist party in the Duma (as A.F. Kerensky asserts in his memoirs from the words of Guchkov) that he, Stolypin, had a foreboding that he would be killed by an agent of the police, indicates that Stalin had predecessors in Czarist times from whom he could have learned quite a bit.

To "Okhrana's" credit one has to admit that from their victims they took only their lives, whereas Stalin, besides life, took also human dignity, forcing his victims by means of unheard-of tortures to publicly beat their breasts and admit to crimes which they had never committed.

The senseless crimes of the despotic Czarist regime, harmful even from the point of view of its own selfish interests, could not help but seal its fate. The fatal denouement for the dynasty was hastened by the breaking out of the war and the "Rasputiniad". I consider it appropriate to dwell at length here on the events which led to the fact that, precisely during the war in which, for the first time in history, not only armies grappled but entire peoples were locked in mortal combat, demanding from the participants the greatest display of their material, intellectual and moral strength, the destinies of the Russian Empire were ruled by Gregory Rasputin, the cunning, illiterate muzhik who in addition was a charlatan, a bribe-taker and a debauchee. These events which took place during the reign of the last Russian Autocratic Czar illustrate indisputably the dangerous surprises, with fateful consequences for an entire country, which absolute power can harbor.

The drama, the last act of which took place in the cellar of the house of Ipatev in Ekaterinburg in the summer of 1918, began with the marriage in November of 1894 of the Czar Nicholas II to the Hessian princess Alice, granddaughter of the English Queeen Victoria, who along with the Orthodox faith took the name of Alexandra Fedorovna.

The Czarina herself was physically healthy but, like all women from the house of the Hessian Grand Dukes, transmitted to her male descendants an incurable disease of the blood - hemophilia. The Czarina transmitted hemophilia to her long-awaited son, the heir to the throne Aleksey, who was born in 1904 after the Czarina had already given her husband four daughters - Olga, Maria, Tatyana and Anastasia.

The Czarina was a loving and devoted wife and mother but, being of a strong and masterful character, she wholly controlled her weak-willed husband. All this would not be so bad if the incurable disease of the son was not added to it. Being by nature a mystic, the Czarina lived in a world which could contain miracles and the supernatural, and along with this - all kind of charlatans who played the role of clairvoyants and wonderworkers. Thus from the very first years of their reign, a number of international charlatans, wonder-workers, with the Frenchman Phillip at the head, operated successfully at the court of Nicholas and Alexandra.

This circumstance took a very serious turn when the supernatural miracle - the only thing that could help the incurably ill heir to the throne became passionately desired, whereas the force supposed to be capable of accomplishing the miracle reposed (in the opinion of the Czarina), in the hands of the "man of God" Gregory Rasputin.

Rasputin arrived at the capital in 1905, already a popular "wanderer", (a preacher wandering from monastery to monastery proclaiming along the way the "word of God"), with a large number of followers, exclusively women, on whom Rasputin engendered an irresistible enchantment.

Introduced into the Czarist court, Rasputin, by being able (as rumor had it) to stop the bleeding of the heir, bent the Czarina wholly to his will and, through her, acquired also an enormous influence on the Czar. This fact was still further aggravated because the Czarina saw in Rasputin not only a wonder-worker, able to heal her hopelessly ill son, but also a clairvoyant who, with his advice, could save the throne and the dynasty from the threatening danger.

Simultaneously, rumors began to be plied in the capital and from there throughout the country, that a number of unscrupulous dealers and conscienceless careerists were using the influence of Rasputin for the attainment of their personal aims, to the detriment of the country.

But the exploits and accomplishments of Rasputin in the field of sensuality served as the main theme of conversation.

Stories were told throughout the country about the wide carouses of Rasputin with a choir of gypsies in the cabarets of the capital and that he led groups of women from the capital's high society to a bath-house, where lascivious sexual orgies ran high. The expression "the talents of Rasputin" received simultaneously a definite content and became of common usage.

All these rumors took on an ominous tone for the monarchy when, after Rasputin quarrelled with his disciple, the monk Iliodor, rumors spread of the existance of letters from the Czarina to Rasputin which compromised not only the Czarina but even the Czarevnas.

No revolutionary propaganda could harm the monarchical idea in Russia more than all these rumors; the presence of the dirty muzhik in the bedrooms of the Czarina and the Czarevnas defiled the cult of the "Czar, the anointed of God" among the simple people, whose simple faith was one of the main supports of the throne. The Czarist throne, made rickety by the "Rasputinshchina" finally crumbled, as we will see further on, when this was joined by the burdens of a disastrous war.

Turning to the major events of that time, I can not fail to mention the death of the great Russian writer, Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy in November of 1910. The author of "War and Peace", as we know, was not only a celebrated writer with a honored place in the Pantheon of world literature, he was also a thinker and a moralist. Though himself a great artist and master of words, Tolstoy, nevertheless, valued content more than form and rejected any kind of art which was not conducive to the improvement of the way of life of the simple people. As a moralist and preacher of "nonresistance to evil", to whose voice the whole world listened, he had a large number of followers.

At the turn of the century Tolstoy was the embodied conscience of the country. To Yasnaya Polyana, the Tolstoy's residence, turned the gazes of all the "insulted and injured", of which in Czarist Russia there were quite a few. Tolstoy's statements in defense of the religious sects which rejected any kind of shedding of blood [37] and his statements chastising the Orthodox church for the practices which contradicted the spirit of true Christianity received particular reknown.

In response, the Czarist government exiled [38] the leaders of the Tolstoyan movement, and in 1901 excommunicated from the church Tolstoy himself.

The Orthodox Church in Czarist Russia was directed by the Holy Synod at whose head stood the appointed by the Czar procurator general - at that time Pobedonostsev, well-known for his reactionary views. In the last years of his life Tolstoy began to find it more and more a burden that, in contradiction to his teachings, he continued to live in comfort and plenty at the time when around him there reigned great poverty among the peasants. These years were also made gloomy for Tolstoy by discords with his faithful and devoted friend of almost half a century - his wife Sofia Andreevna. Sofia A. opposed Tolstoy's desire to make their life-style more humble and, defending the interests of their numerous family, she also opposed Tolstoy's wish to give up his rights as author (copyrights), and the profits from the publishing of his works, transferring the benefits to the people. To be just one should say that, since she had recopied by hand the corrected copies of the books up to ten times, the works of Tolstoy contained also the hard work of Sofia Andreevna's lifetime. At the end of October 1910 Tolstoy decided to cut the Gordian knot. He secretly left his house, intending to begin the life of a poor wanderer, but caught cold immediately and died on the 7th of November in the flat of the station-master of the Ostapovo railroad station at the age of eighty-three; he was mourned by the whole enlightened world.

---

[37] Duchobors and Molokane

[38] Chertkov and Biryukov

Still earlier, in 1904, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov died at a young age of tuberculosis. Along with Maksim Gorky, Bunin, Merezhkovsky and Leonid Andreev, A.P. Chekhov headed a numerous galaxy of writers and dramatists of the turn of the century.

World war I

International politics, prelude to war.
The policies of England, Germany and Russia.
Sarajevo tragedy.
Roots of tragedy, the Balkan war, Berlin Congress.
Oppression of Serbs.
Premeditated war plans of Austria and Germany.
W.W. I breaks out.
Petrograd.
My departure for Petrograd.
Illegal stay as Jew in Petrograd.
Chance of enrolling at the Petrograd University.
Petrograd.
Innocent abroad.
Family settles in Gomel after being endangered at the front.
Nobility of spirit of the Russian students.
False prophecy of socialism.
Description of the university and of my life.
Russian unpreparedness.
Russian politics.
Petrograd Jews.
Historical overview of situation.
Cultural life, library, theater, opera.
Young romances.
Russian military fronts 1915-1916.
Jewish students.
Rasputin.
Sister Emma's family.
My life in Petrograd, studies.
Western front.
Eastern front.

Turning to a survey of events in the area of international politics, in the period preceding the First World War, I would like to say in introduction that at that time the so-called "armed peace" on the European continent was based on the interrelations of two groupings of great powers - the "Dual Alliance" of Russia and France ande the "Tri-ple Alliance" of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. Great Britain remained outside of the groupings and her foreign policy in respect to the European continent was shaped predominantly by her traditional policy of the "balance of power". As we know from the past, in practice this policy was summed up by England's striving to prevent any of the great powers from occupying a dominant position on the continent and if needed, use force in alliance with other powers, to prevent this from occurring. Having eliminated at Waterloo, together with others, the danger on the part of the French, England saw in the growth of Russia in the succeeding period of the nineteenth century a potential threat to the European balance. To this were added the significant territorial acquisitions of Russia in the middle of the last century in Central Asia in which England saw a threat to her colonies in Southeast Asia. In accordance with this England tried to prevent by any means the strengthening of Russia, particularly at the expense of the "sick man of Europe" - Turkey. In the Crimean War (1853-1856) we find England fighting on the side of Turkey as the leader of an anti-Russian coalition of European powers. At the Berlin Congress in 1878 the English Prime Minister Disraeli managed, under the threat of war and with the support of Austria and Bismarckian Germany, to annul the peace treaty of San Stefano and to reduce almost to zero the results for Russia of her victorious war with Turkey in 1877. England had concluded an alliance with Japan as long ago as 1902 and, with her blessing Japan began a war with Russia in 1903, bringing the latter losses and humiliation. On the background of these events the agreement signed in 1907 between England and Russia which settled the vexed questions between them in Asia - Russia renounced any aggressive steps on the approaches to India and a "sphere of influence" was established for each of the powers in Persia - appears as a very important turning point in the relations of England and Russia. As was to be expected, this agreement was only preliminary to an agreement concerning the general policy on the European continent, i.e. in the question not only exceptionally important for both powers but also very urgent in connection with the foreign policy of Germany. For England a reconsideration of the basic conditions which determined her foreign policy on the European continent was dictated by two facts:

1. The Russo-Japanese war exposed the weakness of autocratic Russia and showed the whole world that Russia was a "colossus with feet of clay".
2. Germany then was the leading country in many fields of science - such as medicine, chemistry and physics - as well as in the arts, especially music and was at the apogee of her physical and mentalstrength. Still predominantly an agricultural country at the end of the last century, Germany speedily developed it's industry thanks to the high sense of duty, the diligence, discipline and systematicity of it's population. At that time Germany was successfully challenging England's superiority in the world, even though England had started on the road to industrialization many decades before her. The unusual flourishing of a united Germany after the Franco-Prussian war and the fast growth of her economic and military might utterly dazzled the ruling circles of Germany and impelled them on a path of political ventures and provocations, intensified by their great armaments and the strengthening of their military forces not only on land, but also on sea. An objective analysis of the political situation and the correlation of forces on the continent clearly told England that not Russia but Germany was the one which presented a danger, not only for her policyof "balance", but that Germany, with her program of naval shipbuilding aimed to dispute the superiority of English military forces on the sea. At the beginning of this century Great Britain was at the zenit of her might. Her possessions in all five parts of the world embraced one sixth of the earth's surface and the indisputable superiority of her naval fleet, securing the sea routes of communication with her colonies, represented an inalienable prerequisite for the existance of her oceanic empire. Germany, who with her program of shipbuilding could dispute the English superiority on the sea in the near future had infringed upon a subject vitally important for England, as we can see. The attempt of England (the mission of Lord Haldane) to come to an agreement with Germany on the subject of shipbuilding foundered on Germany's demand for the preservation of neutrality by England in case of an armed conflict on the continent, i.e. a repudiation of the traditional English policy of "balance of power". This unacceptable for England demand of Germany spoke simultaneously of the far from peace-loving plans of the latter on the continent of Europe.

The existence of aggressive German plans on the continent was corroborated in all its breadth with the sending in 1913 by Germany of General Liman von Sanders to Turkey, on active German service, not as an instructor but as the Commander of the troops of the garrison in Constantinople on the Bosphorus. Even previously it was already hard to find in the foreign policy of Germany confirmation that she was putting into practice the policy of friendship with Russia bequeathed her by Chancellor Bismarck, of which Emperor Wilhelm also assured Czar Nicholas in the so-called private correspondence of "Willy-Nicky". On the other hand the fact that Germany used Russia's difficulties in connection with the unsuccessful war with Japan in order to press upon Russia a trade agreement on very unprofitable conditions for the latter and that Germany tried to hinder in 1906 the conclusion of a vitally important for Russia foreign loan, neccessary in order to liquidate the consequences of the war and the revolution and to prevent the devaluation of the ruble, preserving its free exchange to gold, spoke of Germany's hostile feelings toward Russia. In order to properly evaluate the incident with General Sanders and to see it in the appropriate perspective, it is neccessary to understand the enormous significance for Russia of unobstructed exit from the Black Sea through the straits and into the world. In the Czarist time, as is well known, the main object of export from the country was grain which was predominantly supplied by the fruitful "black earth" of the Ukraine (Novorossiya) and the Kuban, adjacent to the Black Sea. As well as grain, high quality iron ore from KrivoyRog was exported almost without exception through the ports of theBlack Sea. The sea route through the straits played a no less important role in the matter of the supply of the South of Russia with objects of import from abroad. The significance of the straits as an exit from the Black Sea was redoubled for Russia by the fact that, not having nonfreezing ports on the Baltic Sea (not to speak about the North Sea), the sea route through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles was for Russia, in the course of the long winter months, not only the cheapest but also the only means of communication with the outside world. With free straits, as we see, were connected the vital interests and well-being of the hundred million people populating the Russian Empire. In light of these facts, the sending by Germany of General Sanders to Bosphorus with a mission not dictated by any German interests, but presenting a serious threat to the vital intersts of Russia, was a challenge and an unprovoked gravely hostile act in respect to the latter. But, still not having recovered from the consequences of the unsuccessful war in the Far East and the revolution - and with a just begun program of rearmament, which would be completed only in 1917, Russia did not pick up the gauntlet thrown her by Germany and limited herself just to protests. By throwing provocative challenges to England and Russia and still earlier, in 1905 and 1911, during the political crises famous under the name of "Morocco" and "Agadir" - also to France, Germany hastened the process of rapprochement between these three powers and the formation by them of the "Triple Entente" grouping. In distinction to the alignments already existing on the continent - the "Double Alliance" and the "Triple Alliance", the members of the new grouping were not joined by a defensive agreement, much less by an offensive one. But the foreign policy of Germany, which did not leave any doubts concerning her aggressive aims, tied them more strongly than any agreements. The policy of challenges and the arrogant speeches of Kaiser Wilhelm, in which he never missed a chance for saber rattling, indicated that, relying on the high level of military skill (confirmed by three victorious wars - with Denmark, Austria and France) of her command, her well- disciplined army, the great arming carried out by her and the high productive capacity of her industry, Germany intended to seek a dominating position on the continent with arms in her hands and to obtain a military denouement before the realization by the Russians of their plans for rearmament. Of the character and dimensions of the German plans in the East we know from the peace treaty which Imperial Germany, feeling herself victorious, imposed on Bolshevick Russia at Brest-Litovsk. The conditions of this treaty tell us that Hitler was not the first one to devise the ideas of a "Herrenvolk" and of ruthless enslavement.The conditions of Brest-Litovsk testify that imperial Germany was already inspired by these ideas when she dictated the conditions by which, annexing the Baltic regions, the Ukraine and the Donbass (with an alien population numerically exceeding her own), she not only hurled Russia back to the boundaries of the Muscovite principality but, depriving her of the only deposits of coal in Russia - the high-caloric Donets coal, Germany also doomed the amputated Russia to the pitiful existance of her satellite, dependent on her not only politi-cally, but also economically. In the murder by Serbian terrorists of the Austrian Heir to the Throne, Franz Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, the Countess Khotek, during a visit by them to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzogovina, Germany found an excuse for the war which she urgently needed because of the progress of Russian armament. The roots of the socalled "Sarajevo tragedy" lay in the decisions in 1878 of the Congress of Berlin to return the regions of the Balkan peninsula - liberated by the strength of Russian arms, populated by Slavic peoples - partially to the hated bloody yoke of Turkey and in part (Bosnia-Herzogovina) to transfer them to the control of Austria-Hungary which, despite the Slavic majority of its population, was dominated by Germans and Madyars. In the century when the aspirations to independence and to self-determination of a number of European nations found its full realization and in the epoch when Germans idolized Bismarck and Italians Garibaldi and Mazzini as leaders who unified their people, the refusal to Slavs of their right to self-determination and unification with their kinsmen could not help but convert the Balkans into a hotbed of eternal conflicts and bloody disturbances. The announcement in 1908 by the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs of the definitive annexation of Bosnia and Herzogovina to Austria-Hungary awoke even more the national consciousness of the Serbian majority of the populations of these provinces and stimulated their yearning to unite with their brethern in adjacent Serbia. The successful Balkan war of 1912 was undertaken in the same spirit, in which an Alliance of Balkan governments, consisting of Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece and organized by Russia (Minister Sazonov), almost ejected the Ottoman Empire from Europe and liberated the compatriots of the members of the Alliance from the Turkish yoke.

WORLD WAR I

International politics, prelude to war.
The policies of England, Germany and Russia.
Sarajevo tragedy.
Roots of tragedy, the Balkan war, Berlin Congress.
Oppression of Serbs.
Premeditated war plans of Austria and Germany.
W.W. I breaks out.
Petrograd.
My departure for Petrograd.
Illegal stay as a Jew in Petrograd.
Chance of enrolling at the Petrograd University.
Petrograd.
Innocent abroad.
Family settles in Gomel after being endangered at the front.
Nobility of spirit of the Russian students.
False prophecy of socialism.
Description of the university and of my life.
Russian unpreparedness.
Russian politics.
Petrograd Jews.
Historical overview of the situation.
Cultural life, library, theater, opera.
Young romances.
Russian military fronts 1915-1916.
Jewish students.
Rasputin.
Sister Emma's family.
My life in Petrograd, studies.
Western front.
Eastern front.

Turning to a survey of events in the area of international politics in the period preceding the First World War, I would like to say as introduction that at that time the so-called "armed peace" on the European continent was based on the interrelations of two groupings of great powers - the "Dual Alliance" of Russia and France and the "Triple Alliance" of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.

Great Britain remained outside of the groupings and her foreign policy in respect to the European continent was shaped predominantly by her traditional policy of "balance of power". As we know from the past, in practice this policy could be summed up as England's striving to prevent any of the great powers from occupying a dominant position on the continent and, if needed, using force in alliance with other powers to prevent this from occurring. Having eliminated the danger on the part of the French at Waterloo, England saw the growth of Russia in the ensuing period of the nineteenth century as a potential threat to the European balance. The significant territorial acquisitions of Russia in Central Asia in the middle of the last century was perceived by England as an additional threat to her colonies in Southeast Asia.

In accordance with this England tried to prevent any strengthening of Russia, particularly at the expense of Turkey, the "sick man of Europe". Thus in the Crimean War (1853-1856) we find England fighting on the side of Turkey as the leader of an anti-Russian coalition of European powers.

At the Berlin Congress in 1878 the English Prime Minister Disraeli managed, under the threat of war and with the support of Austria and Bismarck's Germany, to annul the peace treaty of San

Stefano and to reduce almost to zero the results for Russia of her victorious war with Turkey in 1877. England concluded an alliance with Japan in 1902 and, with her blessing, Japan initiated a war with Russia in 1903, bringing the latter losses and humiliation. On the background of these events the agreement signed in 1907 between England and Russia appears as a very important turning point in the relations of England and Russia. This agreement settled the vexed questions between them in Asia - Russia renounced any aggressive steps on the approaches to India and a "sphere of influence" was established for each of the powers in Persia, but it was only preliminary to a subsequent agreement concerning the general policy on the European continent, i.e. on the question not only vitally important for both powers but also very urgent in connection with the foreign policy of Germany.

For England a reconsideration of the basic conditions which determined her foreign policy on the European continent was dictated by two facts:

1. The Russo-Japanese war exposed the weakness of autocratic Russia and showed the whole world that Russia was a "colossus with feet of clay".
2. Germany then was the leading country in many fields of science - medicine, chemistry and physics - as well as in the arts, especially music, and was at the apogee of its physical and mental strength. Still predominantly an agricultural country at the end of the last century, Germany speedily developed its industry thanks to the high sense of duty, the diligence, discipline and orderliness of its population. At that time Germany was successfully challenging England's superiority in the world, even though England had started on the road to industrialization many decades before. The unusual flourishing of a united Germany after the Franco-Prussian war and the fast growth of their economic and military might utterly dazzled the ruling circles of Germany and impelled them on a path of political ventures and provocations, intensified by their great armaments and the strengthening of their military forces not only on land, but also on sea.

An objective analysis of the political situation and the correlation of forces on the continent clearly told England that Germany, not Russia, was the one which presented a danger, not only for her policy of "balance", but that Germany, with its program of naval shipbuilding aimed to dispute the superiority of English military forces on the seas.

At the beginning of this century Great Britain was at the zenith of her might. Her possessions in all five parts of the world embraced one sixth of the earth's surface and the indisputable superiority of her naval fleet, securing the sea routes of communication with her colonies, represented an inalienable prerequisite for the existence of her oceanic empire.

Germany, who with her program of shipbuilding could dispute the English superiority on the sea in the near future had infringed upon a subject vitally important for England, as we can see. The attempt of England (the mission of Lord Haldane) to come to an agreement with Germany on the subject of shipbuilding foundered upon Germany's demand for the preservation of neutrality by England in case of an armed conflict on the continent, i.e. a repudiation of the traditional English policy of "balance of power". This demand, found totally unacceptable by England, clearly belied Germany's professed peace-loving plans for the European continent.

The existence of aggressive German plans on the continent was fully corroborated in 1913 by Germany's sending of General Liman von Sanders to Turkey on active German service, not as an instructor but as the Commander of the troops of the garrison in Constantinople on the Bosphorus. Even previously it was already hard to find confirmation in the foreign policy of Germany that it was putting into practice the policy of friendship with Russia, a policy bequeathed them by Chancellor Bismarck, and confirmed in the so-called "Willy-Nicky" letters, the private correspondence of Emperor Wilhelm to Czar Nicholas.

Germany used Russia's difficulties in connection with the unsuccessful war with Japan in order to press upon Russia a trade agreement on very unprofitable conditions for the latter. Furthermore, Germany's attempt in 1906 to hinder the conclusion of a foreign loan, vitally important for Russia in order to liquidate the consequences of the war and the revolution, and to prevent the devaluation of the ruble, preserving its free exchange to gold, also spoke of Germany's hostility toward Russia.

In order to properly evaluate the incident with General Sanders and to see it in the appropriate perspective, it is neccessary to understand the enormous significance for Russia of an unobstructed exit from the Black Sea through the straits and into the world.

In the Czarist time, the main commodity of export from the country was grain which was predominantly supplied by the fruitful "black earth" of the Ukraine (Novorossiya) and the Kuban, (adjacent to the Black Sea). Besides grain, high quality iron ore from Krivoy Rog was exported almost without exception through the ports of the Black Sea. The sea route through the straits played an important role also in the matter of supply of the South of Russia with items of import from abroad. The sea route through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles was for Russia, in the course of the long winter months, not only the cheapest but also the only means of communication with the outside world, as Russia did not have non-freezing ports either in the Baltic or North Sea. The vital interests and the well-being of the hundred million people populating the Russian Empire depended upon free straits.

In light of these facts, Germany's sending of General Sanders to Bosphorus with a mission not dictated by any German interests, but presenting a serious threat to the vital intersts of Russia, was considered by Russia as an obvious unprovoked grave hostile act against her. Not having as yet recovered from the consequences of the unsuccessful war in the Far East and the revolution - and with a just begun program of rearmament, (which would be completed only in 1917), Russia did not pick up the gauntlet thrown her by Germany and limited herself just to protests. By throwing provocative challenges to England and Russia and also to France still earlier in 1905 and 1911, during the political crises famous under the name of "Morocco" and "Agadir", Germany hastened the process of rapprochement between these three powers and the formation by them of the "Triple Entente" grouping.

In contrast to the alignments already existing on the continent - the "Double Alliance" and the "Triple Alliance", the members of the new grouping were not joined by a defensive agreement, much less by an offensive one. But the foreign policy of Germany, which did not leave any doubts concerning her aggressive aims, tied them more strongly than any agreements. The policy of challenges and the arrogant speeches of Kaiser Wilhelm, in which he never missed a chance for saber rattling, indicated that, relying on the high level of military skill (confirmed by three victorious wars - with Denmark, Austria and France) of its command, its well- disciplined army, the great arming carried out by it and the high productive capacity of its industry, Germany intended to seek with arms a dominating position on the continent, and to obtain a military denouement before the realization by the Russians of their plans for rearmament.

Of the character and dimensions of the German plans in the East we know from the peace treaty which Imperial Germany, feeling herself victorious, imposed on Bolshevik Russia at Brest-Litovsk. The conditions of this treaty tell us that Hitler was not the first one to devise the ideas of a "Herrenvolk" and of ruthless enslavement. The conditions of Brest-Litovsk testify that Imperial Germany was already inspired by these ideas when it dictated the conditions by which, annexing the Baltic regions, the Ukraine and the Donbass (with an alien population numerically exceeding its own), it not only hurled Russia back to the boundaries of the Muscovite principality but, depriving it of the only deposits of coal in Russia - the high-caloric Donets coal, Germany also doomed the amputated Russia to the pitiful existence of its satellite, dependent on Germany not only politically, but also economically.

In the murder by Serbian terrorists of the Austrian heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand and his morganatic wife, the Countess Khotek, during a visit by them to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzogovina, Germany found an excuse for the war which it urgently needed because of the progress of Russian armament. The roots of the so-called "Sarajevo tragedy" lay in the decisions in 1878 of the Congress of Berlin to return the regions of the Balkan Peninsula - liberated by the strength of Russian arms, populated by Slavic peoples - partially to the hated bloody yoke of Turkey and in part (Bosnia-Herzogovina) to transfer them to the control of Austria-Hungary which, despite the Slavic majority of its population, was dominated by Germans and Magyars. In the century when the aspirations to independence and to self-determination of a number of

European nations found their full realization, and in the epoch when Germans idolized Bismarck and Italians admired Garibaldi and Mazzini as leaders who unified their people, the refusal to Slavs of their right to self-determination and unification with their kinsmen could not help but convert the Balkans into a hotbed of eternal conflicts and bloody disturbances. The announcement in 1908 by the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs of the definitive annexation of Bosnia and Herzogovina to Austria-Hungary awoke even more the national consciousness of the Serbian majority of the populations of these provinces and stimulated their yearning to unite with their brethern in adjacent Serbia.

The successful Balkan war of 1912 was undertaken in the same spirit, in which an Alliance of Balkan governments, consisting of Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece and organized by Russia (Minister Sazonov), almost ejected the Ottoman Empire from Europe and liberated the compatriots of the members of the Alliance from the Turkish yoke.

As a result of this war and the war following immediately afterward between the victors, in which the governments of the Balkan Alliance fought with their member Bulgaria, the Serbs - according to the Bucharest peace concluded in 1913, realized their popular aspirations and goals in the Southern part of the Balkan Peninsula and thus could concentrate on the still unresolved national problems to the North, mainly in connection with the Serbs existing as a minority within the limits of Austria-Hungary.

Speaking of Serbs, it is neccessary in this instance to distinguish two active groups - the government of Serbia, elected by the people on democratic principles, at that time with Pashich at the head - and the popular liberation movements, among which was also the "Black Hand" terrorist organization, very popular among the people, in which Serbian government officials and military personnel participated secretly.

The same ultimate aim united both groups - the unification of all Serbs in a single, independent state - but they diverged concerning the question as to what neccessary measures to undertake in the near future for the realization of the common goal.

Acknowledging that open war with the enormous Empire of the Habsburgs could only lead to the loss of that which was obtained at the price of bloody efforts in the course of the last hundred years, the Serbian nationalist organizations relied on propaganda among their compatriots on the territory of Austria-Hungary (with the aim of strengthening their national consciousness), on the recruiting of active members, and on terrorist acts to obtain the desired goal. For its part the Serbian government in Belgrade could not help but consider the following facts in its activities and plans:

The significant territorial acquisitions made by Serbia in the last two Balkan wars aroused great alarm in Austria-Hungary, since in Vienna they saw - not without reason, a big Serbia as a danger not only to tranquility and order in their provinces populated with Serbs and other Slavic peoples, but also a serious threat to the security of the borders of the Empire from the South, in case of a war with Russia.

For the Serbian government, it must be supposed, it also was not a secret that belligerent circles in Vienna,[1] sought only a suitable excuse to declare war on Serbia, with the aim of liquidating the double danger for the Empire.

In Belgrade also there could be no doubt concerning the ultimate fatal result for Serbia in this case, if she were left to her own resources in this war and were not actively supported by Russia with people and weapons. With regard to the availability of the neccessary help from Russia in case of war with Austria, the conversation which Pashich had with Czar Nicholas during his visit to St. Petersburg in January of 1914 clarified things on that subject. To the statement of Pashich that, according to all signs, war between the Slavic and Germanic peoples was inevitable, Nicholas informed him that Russia was not yet ready for war at the present time. It would be ready only in 1917, when the rearmament of the Russian army would be completed.

---

[1] led by the Heir Franz Ferdinand, the Chief of the General Staff General Konrad Getzendorf and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Berchtold,

Pashich, in contrast from the Serbian organizations, foresaw and feared that, with the tendencies then regning in Vienna, terrorist acts would lead to a war which, as he had personally ascertained in St. Petersburg, it was absolutely essential to avoid at the present time.

On the other hand it was also clear to Pashich as a sober politician that in a struggle with the terrorist organizations he could not count on the support of the Serbian people, indispensable for him as the head of a parliamentary government, since for them the unification of the Serbs, which the terrorists strived for, was a cause not only dear to them but also felt to be righteous.

In the analysis and evaluation of events connected with Sarajevo, we should not forget that the Slavic peoples [2] of the "Patchwork Empire" (as Austria-Hungary was then called) were oppressed. Despite the fact that the Slavs composed the majority of the population, Germans and Magyars were in control of the country and only theirs were the administrative languages.

Returning to Pashich one should say that when, on the 21st of June, through the mouth of Jovanovich, its ambassador in Vienna, the Serbian government warned the Austrian Minister Bilinsky of the danger threatening the Heir there - a week before the announced day of the visit to Sarajevo, it is to be supposed that Pashich was guided by the consideration that, to wit, severe measures against terrorists, as very unpopular among the people, could entail the fall of the government itself and an attempt on the life of the Heir could give Austria the desired excuse for a war which Belgrade was trying to avoid.

However, the Austrian government disregarded the warnings of the Serbian government and did not call off the visit of the heir to Sarajevo. Nevertheless, this did not prevent it from putting all the blame on the Serbian government after the murder of Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo by the Bosnian-Serb student Princeps on June 28th, 1914.

The Vienna government, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Berchtold at the head, in spite of the fact that the results of the investigation by officials from Vienna did not indicate any complicity of members of the government of Pashich in the crime committed in Sarajevo, presented Serbia with an ultimatum on the 23rd of July, 1914, the demands of which Vienna knew beforehand that Serbia, wanting to preserve at least a shadow of its independence, could not fulfill completely even though greatly desiring to comply.

The ultimatum, which demanded an answer within forty-eight hours, by its form and content shocked the whole world.

"I do not know of any other such case where a government would address another independent government with such terrible demands" said Grey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain to the Austrian Ambassador, Count Meynsdorf when he read this document on the 24th of July.

An objective evaluation of the international situation undoubtedly told Austria that the national pride of Russia, her dignity as a great power and Pan-Slavic moods in the country did not allow Russia, the historic protector of it's younger Slavic brethern in the Balkans, to remain passive when powerful Austria attempted to crush Russia's kinsman, little Serbia.

In such a condition of things Austria, making demands on Serbia which they knew beforehand could not be satisfied, also could not help but know that by making war with Serbia inevitable, under the system of alliances and agreements existing in Europe then, they would simultaneously ignite a world conflagration.

The criminal action of Austria-Hungary, plunging the world into a cataclysm from the consequences of which the world can not recover to this day, are explained by the fact that they, as well as their ally Germany, wanted this war and were steering toward it. Austria, haunted by a guilty conscience for their policy of oppression of their Slavic peoples, saw in a "Great" Serbia an approaching Nemesis which they planned to destroy with a war .

The prosperity and integrity of Germany was not threatened by anything from the outside in 1914. In general, Russia had no aggressive plans in respect to them. Greatly weakened by the unsuccessful war with Japan and the revolution, Russia was moreover not yet ready for war.

---

[2] Poles, Ruthenians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes and Serbs

Although the idea of "revanche" in respect to Germany had not subsided in France, a sober evaluation of the international situation, particularly the weakness of her ally Russia, dictated to her a foreign policy of a defensive character, which she followed .

However, stirred by the unprecedented growth of Germany's economic and military might, inspired by various theories, such as:

the superiority of the German race;

that, in order to exist Germany needed more space (Lebensraum);

that great questions could be resolved only with blood and iron;

Germany, following their historic aspiration toward the East (drang nach Osten), decided to undertake great land acquisitions with arms at the expense of Russia and, simultaneously having crushed France, to establish their hegemony in Europe.

Taking into account that, in connection with the declared programs of Russia and France of rearmament and increased armament respectively, time worked against the aggressive plans of Germany, the latter, in search of an immediate denouement, decided not to let slip the chance which the events of Sarajevo presented them.

In a conversation on the 5th of July, 1914, in Potsdam, about "Sarajevo", the Kaiser revealed to the Austrian Ambassador Shegeny that although he was aware that sharp Austrian measures against Serbia would arouse complications of an all-European character, he not only promised full support to his ally, but also considered it neccessary to emphasize that in connection with the military unpreparedness of Russia and France at the present time, never again would the objective conditions for the crushing of Serbia be so favorable.

The decision of Germany to fight "now or never" is further confirmed by the following facts:

that Wilhelm severely reprimanded the German Ambassador to Vienna, Chirsky, when the latter attempted to moderate the bellicose ardor of Berchtold;

that the resistance of the Hungarian Premier Count Tissa, who did not agree to the measures against Serbia, which he saw as leading to an all-European conflict, was broken only when it was revealed by Berchtold that Germany demanded these measures.

The perfidy and the crooked game Germany was playing and their desire for war could be seen clearly when they rejected England's Sir Grey's attempt to save the peace at the critical last moment, when he proposed that the Russo-Austrian conflict should be discussed by Germany, Italy, England and France. This was rejected by Germany under the pretext that they still expected that Russia would agree to the so-called "localization of conflict" proposed by Germany, i.e. that the resolution of the conflict should be left exclusively to Austria and Serbia, which already found themselves in a condition of war.

Rejecting the attempt of England to save the peace, Germany realized fully that the so-called "localization of conflict" would signify the capitulation of Russia and its humiliation in front of the whole world, to which Russia would only agree if vanquished and on its knees.

A number of historians dispute the correctness of the official version of the Versailles Peace Treaty which stated that the war was premeditated and provoked exclusively by the "Central Powers". Thus, some facts are pointed out which contradict the Versailles version:

a- the departure of the Kaiser in the beginning of July for the Norwegian skerries;

b- the Chief of Staff going on leave;

c- the last moment attempt of Germany to halt Austria which remained unsuccessful due to the absence of contact with the latter;

d- the existence of aggressive plans of Russia in respect to the Black Sea straits are pointed out and the insufficiently energetic struggle with the terrorist organizations of the government of Pashich.

Finally, the fact that the general mobilization announced by Russia on the 30th of July, 1914, compelled Germany to declare war.

In an evaluation of all these facts which allegedly indicate the absence of Germany's intention to start a war, the following should be taken into consideration.

In the case of a military conflict with the powers of the Double Alliance, i.e. a war on two fronts, in Germany there was to go in effect a binding plan for the conduct of the war, worked out by General Schliefen, which basically consisted of the following:

Taking into consideration that, as a consequence of a poorly developed network of railroads, the mobilization and the bringing of the Russian army into battle readiness capable of undertaking an offensive action should demand at least six weeks, the plan of General Schliefen directed Germany to use these weeks to crush France with a lightning blow of all its military forces.

Time was a critical and decisive element of this plan. Germany, in order to shorten the time needed to achieve the success of the "Blitzkrieg" in the West, decided to infringe the neutrality of Belgium though it brought a high risk of drawing England into the war against itself.

Taking this circumstance into account, all these reassuring vacations of the Kaiser and his top men should rather be seen as Germany's desire to mislead its enemies concerning its intentions and, by catching them unawares, to win precious time on which hung the success of its campaign in the West - and with this of the entire war.

From the 28th of June, the day of the assassination of the Archducal couple, until the 23rd of July, 1914 - almost a month, the Central powers held the world in ignorance concerning their bloody plans.

A tranquil mood in Europe and an impression that nothing serious should be expected in connection with Sarajevo was sustained for some time, because normal life flowed calmly in the "Central Powers", as if nothing serious had happened.

The political horizon seemed so cloudless that the French President Poincare and Premier Viviani considered this time convenient to make an official visit to Russia in the middle of July.

Germany's iniquitous game, in which she made believe that Austria had gotten completely out of hand, whereas in reality she and Austria acted in close collaboration according to a plan worked out earlier to the smallest details, is illustrated by the following fact:

The Austrian ultimatum which burned all bridges towards peace, from which the world first learned that an all-European war was inevitable (since the Kaiser in Germany and the military clique with General Getzendorf and Berchtold at the head in Austria decreed irrevocably that war was to be waged) was, according to an instruction from Berlin, served to Serbia on the 23rd of July, 1914. It was so calculated that in St. Petersburg its contents would be discovered when Poincare and Viviani were already on the open sea. This left France, the contemplated first victim of the German attack, at the critical moment for a couple of days without a government capable of operating actively. Russia, who did not have any grounds to desire a war, announced a general mobilization only after Austria rejected Serbia's reply (which, with its exceptionally far-going compliance astonished even the Kaiser) and declared war on the latter. The proof that the announced Russian general mobilization was only the excuse which Germany sought for a declaration of war can be perceived by the fact that, as early as July the 26th, four days before this, Moltke, the Chief of the German General Staff, composed the draft of the ultimatum to Belgium, demanding passage through their territory for the German forces.

No Serbian parliamentary government could cope with the terrorist organizations when at the same time in the empire of the Habsburgs a policy of oppression of the Slavic majority was pursued by the German Magyar minority - a policy which inspired and provoked terrorist acts.

As previously mentioned, vital Russian interests lay in the free entrance and exit from the Black Sea, since on this depended the prosperity of the hundred million inhabitants of the Empire.

There are thus no grounds for classifying as an aggressive foreign policy the desire of the Russian Ministers Izvolsky and Sazonov to improve the legal position of Russia in the straits established at the Berlin Congress and their sharp reaction to the provoking mission of the German General Sanders to the Bosphorus.

No protests of the Germans, with Hitler at the head, against the injustice of "Versailles" in the question of the responsibility for the war (die Schuldluege), nor the support in this on the part of certain American historians (Sidney B. Fay and others), can alter the fact of the exclusive responsibility of the then reigning circles of the "Central Powers" for the world catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions - for the loss of millions of predominantly young lives, for the seas of blood, tears and suffering, for the destruction not only of material valuables, but also of cultural and moral values.

The oncoming events hurdled with lightning speed. On the 30th of July the Czar signed an order for universal mobilization. On the 31st of July the German Ambassador, Count Purtales, presented an ultimatum to Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov in which Germany demanded from Russia the recall of the general mobilization within twelve hours and, not having received an answer in time, Purtales declared war on Russia in the name of Germany.

A couple of days later Germany also declared war on France, after France rejected an ultimatum from Germany with the demand that France bind itself to preserve neutrality in the war of Germany with Russia and, as a guarantee that it would fulfill this without fail, it was to hand over to Germany a series of French forts, among them Verdun.

Having vacillated, Great Britain entered the war on the side of France and Russia after Germany, in order to crush France with a lightning blow of all the German forces, infringed on the neutrality of Belgium.

Patriotic demonstrations took place all over. In the capitals the stormy patriotic feelings of the crowds expressed themselves in ravaging - in Petrograd a crowd smashed up the German embassy and in Moscow crowds smashed the stores of German firms - of Emile Zindel and others.

In spite of promising resolutions at meetings of the Socialist Internationals on the brotherhood of peoples and on their steadfast wish to live in peace and of the then popular pacifist slogans, the war bursting out showed that a feeling of deep love for their people and native land and also a readiness to undergo the biggest sacrifices at the altar of their native country was embedded deeply in all the European peoples.

The enormous German Socialist Party, for which not only pacifists nurtured great hopes that it would not tolerate war, as it was represented by her numerous faction in the German Reichstag, voted almost unanimously (with the exception of a small faction of "independents" - Ledebur, Haase and Liebknecht) for the credits neccessary for the conduct of the war and many Socialist Democrats - members of the Reichstag - enlisted as volunteers in the army.

The famous French pacifist Gustave Herve replaced his slogan "Down with war" with an appeal to the French people to defend their native country and the French Socialists, having been deprived of their leader, Jean Jaures, whom nationalists killed in advance (in July of 1914), displayed a maximum of patriotism.

Executing General Schliefen's plan of war on two fronts the Germans, having left a small covering detachment against Russia in East Prussia, advanced with their main military forces into neutral Belgium, where they met the resistance of the small Belgian army, led by Albert, its heroic king.

Using the newly introduced big guns with a diameter of 420 millimeters - the "Big Berthas", the Germans in a short time destroyed the fortified strongholds around Liege and then Namur, hurled back the Belgian army which was forced to retreat north toward Antwerp, and moving across the plain of Flanders, approached the border of France.

In spite of the fact that the readiness of Germany to pay a high price - such as war with England - for the infringement of the neutrality of Belgium, clearly pointed to serious German plans on the Northeast border of France, the Chief Commander of the French army, General Joffre, contrary to healthy common sense undertook a hopeless and in addition purposeless offensive with large French forces on the mountainous Southeast border with Germany.

As a result the superior forces of the reinforced German armies of generals Kluck and Bulow, advancing from Belgium, smashed the insufficient French forces at the first encounter at Charleroix. A not much better fate overtook the English Expeditionary Corps in its first encounter with the Germans near Mons, when under the command of general French they landed in France in a strength of three divisions.

In this situation menacing for the Western Allies, the French main command set about quickly, if under unfavorable conditions, to regrouping of its forces in order to halt the enormous avalanche of German troops advancing in the direction of Paris not meeting either natural obstacles nor resistance on its way.

But in order to describe the events and point out the circumstances which prevented the Germans from obtaining a successful denouement neccessary to them on the Western front, the incidents at this time on the Eastern front should be turned to.

It should be noted here that Italy had declared its neutrality already at the beginning of the war because, in its opinion, under these circumstances its defensive alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary did not come into force. Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. In addition to the opening of a new front in the Caucasus, with Turkey's entry Russia was deprived of its only sea route since the exits from the Baltic sea were located in the hands of Germany who adjoined it on the West. Now Germany acquired sea bases for its cruiser "Geben" and torpedo boat "Breslau" for operations on the Black Sea (the bombardment of Odessa).

In order to restore sea communication with the Western Allies Russia set about the construction of an ice-free port on the Arctic Ocean (a consequence of the Gulfstream) on the border with Norway in Murmansk.

Our life in the first half of 1914 flowed normally - nobody and nothing foreshadowed the oncoming cataclysm.

The school year in the gymnasiom ended, as always, in June, with my promotion to the last class, the eighth.

A little earlier, at the end of May, my sisters Emma and Anya returned from Paris. With them from Paris came to visit us the daughter of mama's brother, Sonya Zeligman.

In the middle of June (by the new calendar), as in recent years, our whole family went to spend the summer in the country place "Zakret ", where our life flowed in its usual way. The assassinations in Sarajevo and the ultimatum presented to Serbia did not pass unnoticed by us. However, they did not provoke the fears among us which they, as it turned out later, actually deserved.

I learned of the declaration of war by Austria on Serbia from a newspaper on the morning of the 29th of July at the railroad station of Podbrodzie, a country place fifty kilometers from Wilno, where I had spent the night visiting acquiantances.

The newspapers told simultaneously of the acquittal in Paris by a jury trial of the wife of the former Premier Cailloux for the murder of the editor of the newspaper Figaro, Calmet.

At the station in Podbrodzie I was struck by the feverish movement of troops. Near Podbrodzie, at the so-called Alekseyevsky firing range, was located the summer camp of the 27th Infantry Division belonging to the garrison of the city of Wilno which, as a result of the political events, was hastily returning to its permanent quarters.

Returning to Zakret, I found the dacha people in great alarm. Handfuls of people who discussed the arising menacing international situation stood in the streets at every gate. They approved of the partial mobilization on the Austrian border announced by the Russian government, since it was clear to all that Russia, after having fought for a whole hundred years for the liberation of the Slavs from the Turkish yoke, sacrificing the life and blood of its sons, could not hand over little brotherly Serbia to the enormous Empire of the Habsburgs for devouring.

Already on the first day of the war all the dacha people - and we among them, returned from Zakret to the city. My cousin Sonya Zeligman left for Paris two days before. The war was met with an outburst of patriotic feelings of the population - from all sides of Russia expressions of loyalty and assurances of readiness to fulfill one's duty for the native land poured in upon the Czar.

General Rennenkampf, Commander of the troops of the Wilno military district, newly assigned Commander of the First army, informed a crowd which gathered in Tselyatnik, a city park in Wilno, about the declared war.
The first volunteer enlisting for the war was a class-mate of my brother David in the Commercial Institute, a Jew, Pernikov - General Rennenkampf appointed him his orderly on the spot. Pernikov was a very bad student. Our common teacher on the subject of God's Law, Fayvel Betselevich Gets, a "learned Jew" at the Wilno Governor General, said he was "a rowdy boy and a hooligan". The fate of Pernikov during the war is unknown to me. (After the war, when I came to Berlin in 1922, I found Pernikov there, already the owner of a large transport company and married to the daughter of one of the richest Jews in Riga, a certain Milman).

The Czar appointed his uncle, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army and General Yanushkevich as his Chief of Staff, General Zhilinsky was appointed Commander of the Northwest front against Germany and General Ivanov of the Southwest front against Austria.
The mobilization in Wilno went without a hitch and the local 27th Infantry Division, consisting of four Regiments [3] entering into the composition of the First Army, was numerically brought up to battle strength with reserves, inhabitants of the city of Wilno. Almost all my acquaintances, among them my former tutor, Henryk Perevozky, the uncle of my friend Alyosha, were incorporated into the Orenburgsky Regiment.

At the insistence of our allies, in order to prevent the Germans from successfully executing the plan of General Schliefen, the troops of the First Army were quickly thrown against the Prussian border, which they now crossed in the first half of August. In the first clash with German troops at Stalupenen, unsuccessful for the Russians, the Orenburgsky Regiment suffered very great losses in dead. At Stalupenen perished all my acquaintances, among them the uncle of Alyosha who left a young wife and a little boy. The Commander of the Orenburgsky Regiment, Colonel Komarov, was also killed and a solemn funeral was held for him in Wilno. But the first failure of the attack of the army of Rennenkampf did not halt it and after the battle of Gumbinen, successful for the Russians, they occupied the city of Isterburg, an important railroad junction.
At the demand of the French, the 2nd Army, under the command of General Samsonov, advanced simultaneously with the First Army into East Prussia, moving from South to North, to the West of the Masurian Lakes, without the neccessary preliminary measures and preparation.
The activity of the Russian army as early as the third week after the declaration of war was unforseen by the plan of General Schliefen - the wide wave of German refugees from East Prussia, the cradle of Prussian Junkerdom, forced the German High Command to transfer a division of cavalry and two corps of infantry from the Western to the Eastern front.
However even before the arrival of troops from the West, the newly appointed Commander of German troops in the East, General Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff, General Ludendorf, taking advantage of the entirely ujustified inactivity of Rennenkampf's army and executing the plan of the German Colonel Max Hofman, stripped their front on the East and threw all the troops they had at their disposition against the advancing 2nd Army, which they surrounded and smashed completely in the battles of Osterode and Solday.
In this perished the Commander of the 2nd Army, general Samsonov, who committed suicide and generals Martos and Pestich. The hurriedly retreating across the frontier remnants of the army of Samsonov exposed the left flank of the Army of Rennenkampf and forced it to clear East Prussia and quickly retreat to the river Niemen.

---

[3] the Orenburgsky, Saratovsky, Troitsky and Ufimsky

The Russian self-sacrifice was not without results, for the troops which the Germans were compelled to transfer from the Western to the Eastern Front were missed at the decisive battle on the approaches to Paris, on the Marne river in the beginning of September.

On the Marne the Allies finally managed to eliminate the numerical superiority of the Germans and to throw back the advancing Germans, taking advantage of the mistake of the Commander of the First German Army, General Kluck, who advanced his right flank under jeopardy from the troops of the Parisian garrison.

Beginning with the battle on the Marne, military activities in the West lost their manuevering character and took on the character of trench warfare.

The fact that Germany did not manage to realize the plan of General Schliefen - to obtain an early denouement and to liquidate the Western front- was of decisive significance and subsequently decided the outcome of the war.

This gave Great Britain the time it needed to mobilize all the forces of its enormous empire and to hurl them into the theater of operations, and for the United States to join the anti-German coalition in the last critical phase of the war in 1917, landing its troops on the European continent.

The impact of the defeats of the Russians in East Prussia was mitigated by the simultaneous Russian victories over the Austrians. The Russians smashed the Austrians in a number of battles, took a large amount of prisoners, occupied Eastern Galicia with the city of Lvov and encircled Premysl, a fortress on the river San, and came close to the Carpatians.

On the Eastern front, the war preserved its maneuvering character after the retreat of the Russians from Prussia. In October the newly arriving Russian troops from Siberia repulsed the Germans advancing toward Warsaw. In November the Germans renewed their attacks in Poland, however; German troops under the command of General Makensen, specialists in breakthroughs, managed to break through in an easterly direction (Strykov-Brzezin) but got into difficulties themselves - by the stories of the workers, the management of the Poleskiye Railroads was already preparing railroad cars in Wilno for the transportation of German prisoners.

According to the stories, the autenticity of which I could not verify, the Germans managed to get out of the encirclement only because Genral Rennenkampf committed a gross blunder again.

In the following series of battles the Germans managed to occupy the city of Lodz, the biggest center of textile industry in Russia. As I recall, in Poland the front was established for the winter along the course of the Bzura river and in Galicia on the approaches to the city of Cracow and at the passes through the Carpathians.

It should be noted here that, after just a few months from the beginning of military activities, Russian troops at the front began to experience acute shortages in weaponry and ammunition through the fault of the government, mainly of the War Minister, General Sukhomlinov, a favorite of Czar Nicholas. In addition, though the Russian troops could fight with success against the Austrian army, the Slavic majority of which did not display great enthusiasm in a war against their Russian kinsmen, in the war with Germany the results were predetermined. Against the high military skill of the German Command, the well disciplined, excellently armed and plentifully supplied German army, the Russians could only resist with the Russian soldier, denoted by personal bravery, patriotic sentiment, fortitude and undemandingness, but poorly led and short of guns and ammunition.

To the new German military tactics, such as the wide application of machine guns and a hurricane of heavy artillery fire concentrated in great amounts on a narrow sector of the front, the so-called mass preparatory bombardment, which preceded each German attack and swept away all obstacles in its way, deafening and demoralizing the enemy, the Russian could answer only with the fire of their largely antiquated rifles, (Berdans) and with the infrequent fire of artillery, which had to consider each shell.

Regarding the Russian military tactic, it progressed little since the time of Suvorov, when briliant victories were gained by holding on to the dogma: "the bullet is a fool, but a bayonet is a fine fellow".

As in the good old times, the Russians, paying a heavy tribute with the life and blood of their soldiers, continued to use widely the bayonet attacks, which rarely attained their goals since

they broke up under the fire of German machine guns, mercilessly mowing down rows of attackers.
In February of 1915, German troops, advancing from the Prussian border eastward, broke through the front of the army of Sivers, who replaced Rennenkampf, and the Russians, in a retreat that turned into flight, suffered great casualties in killed and prisoners.

Daily life in Wilno changed little in outward appearance with the declaration of war. Since there was no shortage of goods in wide demand, the buying power of the ruble remained steadfast in the course of the first year of the war. To avoid economic shocks, the government declared a moratorium on the payment of promissory notes and other dated monetary obligations. Though the timber operations were suspended, everybody was convinced that the war could not continue much longer and that a return to peaceful conditions was a question of only a few months.
Studies at our gymnasium began at the usual time. My classmate, Leonid Semenov left the gymnasium and enrolled in the newly organized school for officers with an accelerated course.

Military events fascinated me wholly. I greedily picked up news from the fronts and followed attentively the progresses of both our and enemy troops. I carefully studied the geographic maps of the theatres of military operations, in the east as well as in the west. I knew by heart the names of all the fortresses, their location and design and also the names of the natural barriers, such as rivers and mountains. In addition to the local newspapers I also bought the ones from the capital which, besides communiques from the headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-chief, carried also the telegrams of their correspondents from the capitals of neutral nations, in which they commented on military events. I recall the telegrams from Copenhagen of the correspodent of the capital newspaper "Stockmarket News" (Birzhevye Novosti), a certain Kirdetsov, in which he, apparently in order to support morale within the country, gave vent to his rich imagination.
The atrocities committed by the German troops on the civilian populations - savage reprisals, such as mass executions and destruction of cities, in Belgium often along with valuable monuments of olden times, received much publicity in the world press. Especially great indignation was evoked by the destruction by the Germans of the historic library in Luvain. The newspapers were filled with details of the barbaric deeds of the Teutons.
When hospital trains with wounded began to come from the near front, I took an active part during evenings in the transportation of the seriously wounded on stretchers - in order to spare them a painful shaking by conveyance in hospital carts whose wheels were wrapped with iron, along roadways paved with cobblestones - to a military hospital about five kilometers distant from the station.
In spite of these events, which jarred our foundations and agitated our lives, the school authorities tried to preserve a strict pre-war discipline in our student life.
In connection with this I recall an episode which could have had very sad consequences for me. I have already mentioned the extra, outside of school supervision, according to which students of the gymnasium were forbidden to appear on the street after eight o'clock in the evening. Since during the transportation of the wounded I had repeatedly infringed these rules with impunity, I had the imprudence to make the false conclusion that as a matter of fact the extra-school supervision did not exist any more. As a result of this I was arrested in the central city square, when the clock located there showed 8:30,

by a class perceptor of the First Gymnasium, a certain Dreko. Handing over to him, at his demand, my student ticket, I asked Mr. Dreko to determine the exact time and when he declared that by his watch it was a quarter to nine, I dared to remark: "This is the special time you keep for the catching of students."

Within a couple of weeks a copy of the report of the preceptor Dreko, sent by a trustee of the school district, reached the director of our gymnasium. In his report Dreko declared that I not only was found on the street at a forbidden time, but also "with his impertinent remark he dared in my person to insult the entire pedagogic staff of the First Gymnasium".

In the words of my class perceptor, a teacher of history who was not well disposed towards me - I had the imprudence to correct his erroneous assertion at a lesson - in the best of cases a "four" in conduct awaited me and, according to the then existing rules, I would not to be permitted to take the final examination for the "Maturity Diploma".

My sisters Emma and Anya saved me by going to Mr. Dreko's home to entreat him "not to ruin a young life". "Your brother is saucily forward" said Mr. Dreko, but nevertheless he withdrew his report.

My brother David and I endured very painfully the defeat of the army of General Sasonov which, as our homegrown tacticians told us, occurred to a large degree by fault of the Commander of the 1st corps, General Artamonov, who ordered his corps to retreat - and in the wrong direction at that. We even slightly beat up David's tutor, Samuel Isidorovich Minsker, who as a so-called "defeatist" did not hide from us his joy on the occasion of Russian failures in East Prussia, since only defeat could lead to the fall of the hated Czarist regime.

Samuel I. Minsker was the son of less than wealthy parents. His father managed the so-called "Cheap Hygienic Apartments" built in Wilno by the Jewish Colonizing Society with the means of the famous French philantropist, the Jewish Baron Hirsh.

By coincidence, thirty years later, a work camp was to be located in the complex of buildings of the "cheap apartments", to which the Hitlerists moved myself, my wife and my daughter after the liquidation of the "Ghetto" of Wilno. Not possessing the neccessary means for studying in the gymnasium, Samuel I. received the "Maturity diploma" having passed the examination as an "external student" at the School District.

However, in spite of his repeated attempts he could not be admitted to an Institution of Higher Learning since he was a Jew.

In order to remove this obstacle to the receipt of a higher education he, from desperation, converted to the Lutheran faith but went back to Judaism in a couple of days since, as he explained to me, he feared that his mother, a religious woman, would not survive this blow.

Not having the neccessary means to continue his education abroad, Samuel I. had to content himself with an unpromising tutorship, work which did not satisfy him at all.

I ran into Samuel I. Minsker again during the war, in Petrograd, where he finally managed to get into the university. After the October revolution, as a member of the Bolshevik Party and an appointed comissar to the "Petrograd Private Commercial Bank", he opened the bank safes in order to confiscate the valuables of the "bourgeoisie" found there.

I dwelled at length on the life of Samuel I. Minsker since he appears a typical representative of that part of Jewish youth whom legal restrictions and persecutions pushed, in the Czarist time, to wide participation in the revolutionary movement and, after the coup of October, 1917, to serving in the nucleus of the governmental apparatus improvised by the Bolsheviks.

The Russian Supreme Command, wanting to conceal from the people the real reason for their defeats - their lack of skill and their unpreparedness for war - began to seek out "scapegoats" so that they would have someone to blame for the failures on the front with Germany.

It found them in the person of the Gendarme Colonel Myasoyedov, serving at the bordering Germany railroad station Berzhbolovo and the Jews living in the area near the front line.

Two Jews - the Friedberg brothers, inhabitants of the small town of Vilkovishki on the German border and a number of Russian citizens of German descent, among them the father of my acquaintance Amelya Rigert, were implicated with Myasoyedov.

All the accused were executed by sentence of a military court, closed to the public, which found them guilty of espionage on behalf of the Germans.

It is difficult for me to judge the degree of guilt of Myasoyedov. I personally knew of his existence since, long before the war, he and the uncle of my wife, Gesel Shapiro, a client of my father's, jointly owned timber works in the Caucasus. In 1911 Gesel Shapiro went bankrupt and the promissory notes for 3,000 rubles given by him to my father with the endorsement of Myasoyedov were never paid.

At the same time, anti Jewish propaganda began on the initiative of the Russian High Command. Accusations of the most fantastic character poured down against the Jews living in the front line area. In one small town the Jews were accused of taking out gold to Germany in coffins, together with the dead. It was drummed into the ignorant Russian soldier that the Jews hid wireless transmitters in their beards, which they used to inform the enemy of the movement of Russian troops.

In May, 1915, at the demand of the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command, General Yanushkevich, (as the Minister of Internal Affairs, Prince Shcherbatov asserted in a conversation with a Jewish delegation visiting him), the Russian government evicted all the Jews from the Kovenskaya and Kurlandskaya provinces, adjacent to the theater of military operations.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews had to leave in the shortest of time - a few days - their homes of many years and all the property accumulated, often by the labor of a whole lifetime, and go into the unknown, into the depths of Russia.

I recall how, on the day of the Jewish holiday Shavuot, during the worship service in our synagogue, we received the news that trains with evictees from the city of Kovno, who were not allowed to stop at the Wilno station, were being detained ten kilometers from the city, at the station of Novovileysk.

I also remember that at these news, the religious rules forbidding travel on holidays notwithstanding, my father, together with our neighbor Vladimir Grigoryevich Isserlin, left in a carriage for Novovileysk with provisions for the evictees.

Arranging improvised dormitories and soup kitchens, the Jewish community of Wilno responded with a great and energetic sympathy towards the terrible misfortune engulfing our compatriots, the inhabitants of neighboring provinces.

Our synagogue was also converted into a dormitory for evictees. The Gersteins, the family of my future wife Ida, took into their home on Antokol the large family of their Kovno relatives, the Shereshevskis.

Due to the lack of means of transportation, a part of the evictees from the neighboring small towns of Lithuania came to our town on foot.

I remember that I took a wholeheartedly active part myself in the organization of help for the evictees.

The undeserved persecutions and harassment of the Jews could not help but strengthen "defeatist" feelings (hoping for the defeat of Russia) among the Jewish population. These feelings were urgently dictated by the most primitive instincts of self-preservation, for it was clear to each that a Russian victory would undoubtedly consolidate a regime which knew no mercy for Jews.

The tragedy occurring before my eyes could not help but mute my original patriotic ardor.

In June 1915, having passed the examinations for a Maturity Diploma, I graduated from the Gymnasium.

Of the forty graduates, six pupils (all Jews) were awarded medals. To receive a silver medal one had to have no less than six "fives" in the grades of eleven subjects and the rest "fours". I had the needed six "fives", but was not awarded a medal since, on the examination, in my composition - " Old time servants in the works of the Russian classics" - I made an error in spelling (I wrote "yat" instead of the first "e" in the word "breetsya") and received on the subject of "Russian Literature" a "three" on my diploma. My teacher of this subject, Kudrinsky, did not notice this mistake; it was found by a member of the examination commission, my "friend" the history teacher, M.S. Kokhanovich.

It should be noted here that by this time the receipt of a medal upon finishing the gymnasium had lost its importance for Jewish youths, since several years before the war the reactionary-minded Minister of Education Kasso, while keeping the "percentile norm" for the Jews, introduced for their admittance to the institutes of higher education the so-called lottery instead of the former contest of diploma grades.

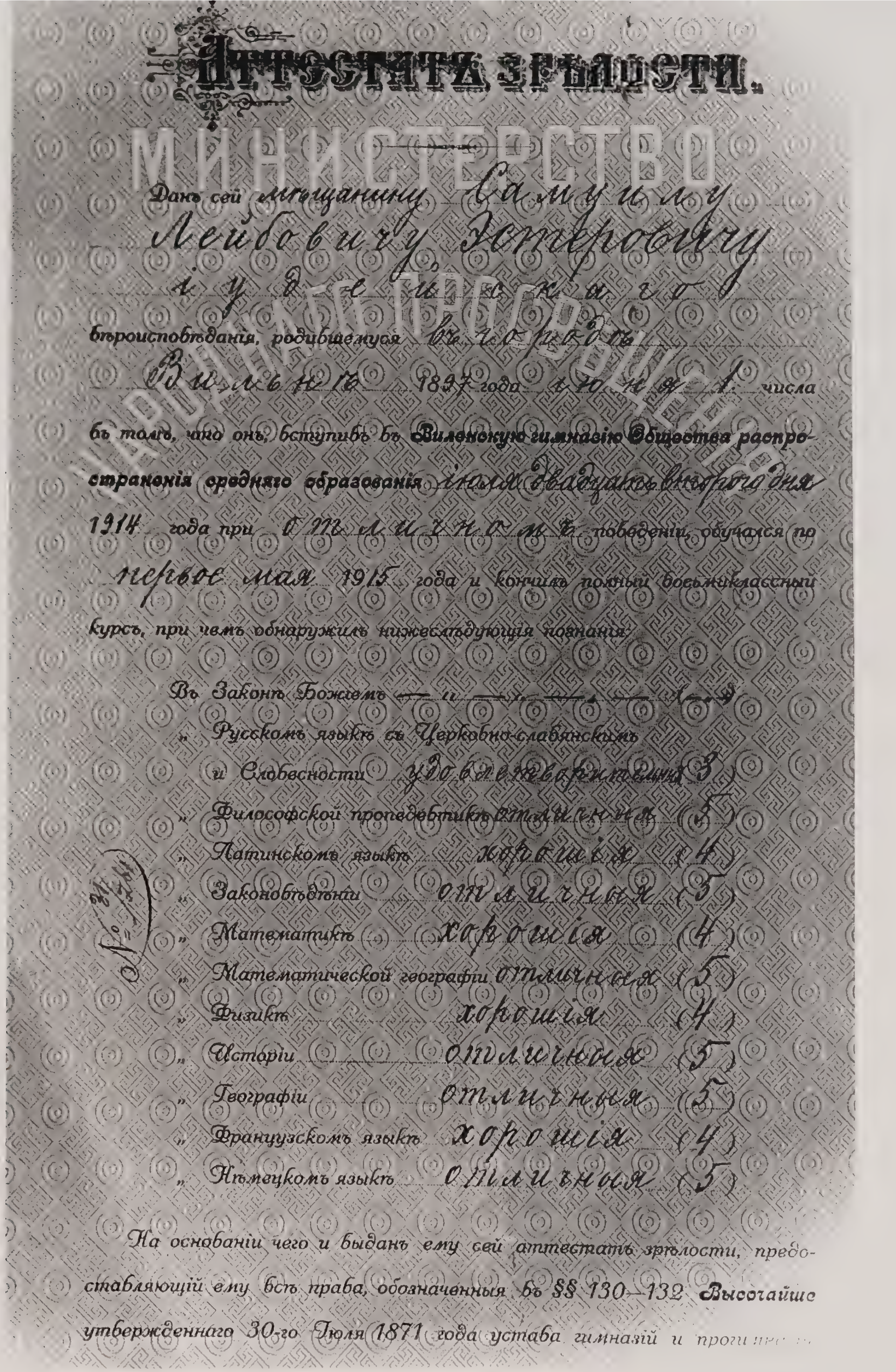
The Russian government had apparently suddenly realized that to give preference to the more able Jewish youths, giving the opportunity to receive a higher education to honors students only, was not in line with its anti-Jewish policy.

In the beginning of June, 1915, having no forebodings of any big changes in the theater of military operations, our whole family went, as in recent years, for the summer months to a dacha on the estate of Verki, located six kilometers from the city up the Wilja river; Verki was renowned for its palace, built at one time by the Radziwill princes and also for the centuries-old pine park surrounding it.

According to the stories of old residents, Verki changed its owners several times in the course of the last century. From the Radziwill this estate went as a dowry to prince Witgenstein and from him, the same way to prince Hohenlohe.

At the turn of the century Verki belonged to the Governor of Wilno, Chepelevsky, who sold the estate to the Polish landowner Spinak several years prior to the war.

Regular communication between the city and Verki was maintained in the summer by steamboats with paddle wheels. In Verki we led the usual carefree life of dacha people - we went into the forest to pick mushrooms and berries and undertook walks to the nearby "Green Lake" and to Novoverki, where a large paper mill was located which belonged to the Jew Schwartz. In the evenings we got together with other dacha people and sang Russian romances and folk songs, completely forgetting the threatening events which were taking place all around, but they did not delay in reminding us of their existence.



АТТЕСТАТЪ ЗРѢЛОСТИ.

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НАРОДНАГО ПРОСВѢЩЕНІЯ

Данъ сей мѣщанину Самуилу Лейбовичу Эстеровичу іудейскаго вѣроисповѣданія, родившемуся въ городѣ Вильнѣ 1897 года іюня 1 числа въ томъ, что онъ, вступивъ въ **Виленскую гимназію Общества распространенія средняго образованія** іюля двадцать второго дня 1914 года при отличномъ поведеніи, обучался по первое мая 1915 года и кончилъ полный восьмиклассный курсъ, при чемъ обнаружилъ нижеслѣдующія познанія:

Въ Законѣ Божіемъ	— и —	(—)
„ Русскомъ языкѣ съ Церковно-славянскимъ и Словесности	удовлетворительныя	(3)
„ Философской пропедевтикѣ	отличныя	(5)
„ Латинскомъ языкѣ	хорошія	(4)
„ Законовѣдѣніи	отличныя	(5)
„ Математикѣ	хорошія	(4)
„ Математической географіи	отличныя	(5)
„ Физикѣ	хорошія	(4)
„ Исторіи	отличныя	(5)
„ Географіи	отличныя	(5)
„ Французскомъ языкѣ	хорошія	(4)
„ Нѣмецкомъ языкѣ	отличныя	(5)

На основаніи чего и выданъ ему сей аттестатъ зрѣлости, предоставляющій ему всѣ права, обозначенныя въ §§ 130—132 **Высочайше** утвержденнаго 30-го Іюля 1871 года устава гимназій и проги

Ministry of public education MATURITY DIPLOMA awarded to the commoner of Judaic persuasion SAMUEL son of LEIBA ESTEROWICZ born in Wilno on June 1st (old dating) 1897. He was enrolled in Wilno at the Gymnasium of the society for propagation of secondary education on July 22nd, 1914 and studied there with excellent comportment until May 1st, 1915, completing the eight year course and exhibiting the following learning: The excellent grade in comportment was crucial for graduation. Samuel missed getting a medal by a 3 in Russian, caused by a disastrous misspelling on exam

As early as May, 1915, German troops undertook a decisive attack on the eastern front. It began in Galicia at Gorlitse, near the city of Tarnov, with a massive preparatory bombardment - a hurricane fire of heavy artillery concentrated there in great quantity, which prepared and facilitated the breach of the Russian front by a large German force under the command of general Makensen.
Attacking at the same time from East Prussia and thus also threatening the Russian troops from the north, they compelled the latter to a general retreat and the withdrawal by them of the Polish troop concentrations protuberance to the west and from the part of Galicia conquered by the Russians previously.
In the course of the summer months the Germans, having seized the Russian fortresses of Novogeorgievsk and Ivangorod, forced a crossing of the Vistula and occupied first Warsaw, the capital of Poland, and then the fortress of Brest-Litovsk which was defending the line of the Bug river.
Attacking from East Prussia in a south and east direction, they atttacked the Russian fortresses of Ossovets, Grodno and Kovno (the last two on the river Niemen) and, operatng simultaneously in a northern and northeastern direction, began to approach the West Dvina river on a wide front.

We in Wilno felt the breath of the nearing frontline at the beginning of August, when the military authorities summoned the male population of the city from the age of eighteen on to dig trenches around the city. I took part in this as an eighteen-year-old.
Our party of men was led on foot to the estate of Buyvidishki, ten kilometers from the city. There the commander of the troops of the Wilno military district, Prince Tumanov, addressed us with a speech. We spent the night on hay in a barn, and set about the work early in the morning. Having worked for two days under the guidance of soldiers - sappers, I returned home. This event served the dacha people as a signal to return to the city.
In addition, it was already time for me personally to get started in my efforts to enroll into the university. Having decided to endeavor to enter the juridical department, in the second half of August I decided to travel to Petrograd in order to submit my documents to the university.
It was Friday night at midnight when I got on the express train which, according to schedule was supposed to arrive in Petrograd at nine o'clock in the morning. I was already seated on the train when a German "Zeppelin" attacked the Wilno railroad station and hurled a heavy bomb which exploded nearby with an enormous crash.
Panic ran high among the passangers on the train, with the hysterical crying of the women and children (in my sleeping compartment was located the family of General Grigorev, the commander of the Kovno fortress, which was already besieged by the Germans.)
Our train was not damaged, but as a result we left with a three hour delay and arrived at the Varshavsky station at twelve noon instead of the expected nine o'clock in the morning. Still another hour passed before I reached the university on Vasilevskoye Island, where to my horror I found the office of the university closed, since on Saturdays it was open only until one in the afternoon.
The neccessity of staying in Petrograd until Monday, when the office would open once again - for to return to Wilno without having submitted the documents was out of the question - put me, as a Jew, who had no right to stay in Petrograd, in an exceedingly perplexing situation.

Having refreshed myself at a restaurant, tired after a sleepless night, I began, not having a definite purpose, to wander about the unfamiliar city.

Coming to a hotel, I decided to drop in there. I told the clerk: "I am a Jew and am ready to pay whatever you demand for a night's lodging."

However, fearing undesired consequences, I did not have the pluck to go to the manager of the hotel, to whom the clerk had directed me. Finding myself on the street, I began again to wander and it was already dark when I, almost falling on my feet from fatigue, found myself in the center of the city - on the corner of Nevsky Prospect and Sadovaya street - and got into a cab, hoping to take a nap during the ride and ordered the cabman to go to the distant Varshavsky station and, arriving there, to turn around again to Nevsky.

After I had repeated these trips several times with different cabmen, I came, late in the evening, from the Varshavsky station to the nearby Baltyski station, where I fell asleep sitting on a chair in the waiting hall. I woke up laying on the floor when they awoke me and asked me to leave the station, which they closed for the night.

I spent the remainder of the night on a bench in some park.

I spent the second night at a Jewish pharmaceutical assistant's, who shared his narrow and hard bed with me at the request of my Wilno friend, Yasha Rabinovich, whom I met by chance on the Nevsky.

These deprivations were not in vain - on Monday I learned at the university of a possibility to be accepted in the university outside of the quota established for the Jews. The new Minister of People's Education, Count Pavel Ignatyev, who replaced the reactionary Kasso (the latter had to leave his post after he was found at a hotel with the wife of Denisov, a member of the Government Council), gave orders that Jews who were dependents of participants in the war should be accepted to institutions of higher education outside the percentile norm. The celebrated "Dependence is the mother of learning" gave an opportunity to thousands of Jewish youths, myself among them, to enter institutions of higher education.

The evacuation of Russian public establishments was already in full swing when I returned to Wilno from Petrograd. For twenty-five rubles the police officer of our police district confirmed with his signature and with the affixing of his official seal, (which in connection with the evacuation was already packed), that I was a dependent of the Private in Active Service, Berka Sheynyuk, a poor relation of ours.

Having in my hands the document which ensured my enrollment to the university, I went once again to Petrograd on the 28th of August, 1915. This time the departure was not such a simple affair, since the railroad ticket offices were literally besieged by those wishing to leave the city.

Since the Commercial Institute which my brother David attended was being evacuated to Petrograd, he also intended to travel there for the beginning of his studies in the middle of September.

Foreseeing the occupation of the city by the Germans and not wishing to be cut off from their younger sons, my parents decided to leave the city of Wilno with the rest of the family and travel to the east into the depths of Russia.

Several days after my departure, having provided himself with cash money - 25,000 rubles - my father left for the east with two horses purchased especially for this purpose, with wagons on which they loaded clothes, linen, pillows, blankets, feather beds and neccessary household utensils. As the first halting place, they stopped at the estate of Berkovshchizna which, along with a distillery, was leased from the landowner Kozel Poklevsky by a relative of my father, a certain Kheyfets.

This estate was located around 150 kilometers to the east of the city of Wilno, near the station of Krivichi of the strategic Bologoye Sedletskaya railroad, built with money borrowed from the French. From there my parents intended to travel by railroad and settle in one of the small towns adjacent to Petrograd.

Upon my arrival in Petrograd I immediately submitted my documents to the office of the university but, not having received the confirmation from them that I was accepted right away, I again found myself, even though temporarily, on the streets of Petrograd without the right of residence.

Roaming without a goal on Nevsky Prospect, I was glad to meet my acqaintance from Wilno - Efim Pavlovich Kozovsky. Kozovsky, himself a native of the city of Rechitsa, by profession an engineer, returned from the United States before the war and used to visit our house along with a close girlfriend of my sister Anya, the pianist Bertha Shakhnovich.

I was still gladder when Efim Pavlovich, having learned of my predicament, told me that, not having the right of residence himself, he spent the nights illegally, i.e. without registration, at some Jews on Kuznechny Lane and that a place would be found there for me too. Here I would like to recount a fact which demonstrated my guilessness and ignorance of life at that time and which served me as a lesson in the first steps of my independent life.

Separating for an indefinite time, my father entrusted a thousand rubles to me, which I carried in a bag sewed by my mother which hung down on my chest. This was a large sum then, considering that the average student budget consisted of around thirty rubles. Having spent the night in very unattractive conditions on Kuznechny Lane and intending to go to the university, I asked Efim Pavlovich, entrusting my thousand dollars to him, to kindly do me the favor of depositing the money in a savings bank in my name, since I did not want, in view of the surroundings, to carry it with me through the slums. In my naivete I thought it inconceivable at that time that I could not entrust 1,000 rubles to a fellow who was received at our home.

In the evening Kozovsky informed me that he had not been able to deposit my money in a savings bank since for this a specimen of my signature was required. However, returning my money to me, he revealed to me that he had borrowed 300 rubles from me; I accepted this right away, still having no inkling of anything wrong.

Engineer Kozlovsky turned out to be a very frivolous person. He lost the money taken from me, as I later learned, at billiards. A week later Kozovsky attempted, through a lady with whom he acquainted me, to get still more money from me, but I, having gained "life experience", refused her politely. Kozlovsky returned the "borrowed" money several years later, when the Russian ruble was very much devalued.

Having received confirmation soon afterwards that I was a student at the juridical department of the Imperial Petrograd University and with this the right to reside in Petrograd, I rented, for myself and my brother David, whose arrival I expected by the middle of September, a room for twelve rubles a month in the home of a Jewish artisan, located on the corner of Sadovaya street and Veznesensky Prospect. In this house was also located one of the numerous bakeries of Fillipov scattered about Petrograd and Moscow, which were renowned for their delicious pirozhki - with jam, meat, cabbage and other fillings. The pirozhki were still priced at three kopeck a piece then. I immediately informed my brother David of my address in Petrograd, he was then in Berkovshchizna, together with my whole family.

Since several weeks still remained before the beginning of studies at the university, I decided to take part in the work of the Jewish organizations in their endeavors to bring help to the victims of military operations - the German attack which made great advances during the summer because of an acute shortage of weapons and ammunition among the Russians, and still earlier the eviction of the Jews from the front-line area engendered a big wave of refugees.

Along with the comprehensive Russian public organizations - Zemsky Soyuz (Zemstvo Union) and the Soyuz Gorodov (Union of Cities) - the Jewish Committee of Help for Victims of War (EKOPO), specially organized in the capital for this purpose and the Society for the Health Care of Jews (OZE), (with doctors Gran and Semen Grigoryevich Frumkin at the helm), also took a big part in the matter of bringing help to the refugees.

In the middle of September I was sent, together with a nurse, (on the initiative of the OZA, with plenary powers also from the Union of Cities), on a mission to the city of Dvinsk, a railroad junction on the West Dvina, in order to organize the departure of inhabitants wishing to leave the city because of the impending approach of enemy forces.

The nearness of the front was already very much felt in Dvinsk when I came there. German airplanes often circled over the city and the Russians fired on them from artillery field guns, since they had no antiaircraft guns. The boom of artillery fire reached the city and at night the sky was red from the glow of villages burning in the surroundings.

Our transport of refugees, which the nurse and I accompanied, consisted of forty-fifty railroad freight cars. It stood for two days on the branch joining the Northwestern and the Rigo-Orlovsky railroads, until on the night of the 18th of September, on Yom Kippur, it started off in the direction of Petrograd.

I had no suspicion then, that a little further south from Dvinsk, events were taking place which contained dramatic surprises for my family.

As a result of a military operation undertaken by the German troops, the so-called "Novosventyansky breakthrough", the Germans occupied the city of Wilno without struggle on the 18th of September, 1915. The occupation continued for almost three and a half years. I will dwell at greater length on this operation, because for my family it brought shattering experiences and physical deprivations. One night, on the eve of their departure from Berkovshchizna (this was a couple of days after the departure of my brother David for Petrograd), the entire family was woken up by a crash of numerous explosions, which came from the direction of the Krivichy railroad station, located only one kilometer from them.

These were, as it turned out, Germans who, having appeared completely unexpectedly, blew up the strategically very important Bologoye Sedletskaya railroad.

As it later became clear, instead of attacking Wilno from the front, a corps of German cavalry, under the command of general Shmettov, broke through the Russian positions in the region of Novo-Sventyan - seventy kilometers to the north of Wilno - and not encountering any resistance, moving like lightning to the southeast, came out 150 kilometers to the rear of Wilno, having encircled the city from three sides.

Saving themselves from encirclement, the Russians abandoned the city of Wilno, and managed to retreat in a southerly direction, the only one still open to them - to the city of Lida.

My family, awakened by explosions, to save themselves from Germans left hurriedly for the east and managed to reach the small town of Dolginovo, lying twenty-one kilometers to the east, when German artillery overtook them.

During the ensuing battle with the Russians who, in order to liquidate the breakthrough, concentrated large forces of cavalry, fires sprang up in the small town in which a large part of my family's belongings burned down.
Finding themselves thus on the front they were subjected to mortal danger in the clashes between Germans and Russians into which they fell repeatedly while journeying about territory which was passing from hand to hand. They had almost reached the city of Minsk after a whole month of wandering, distressing experiences and deprivations, when they found themselves finally on the Russian side.
At the Usha station of the Libavo-Romnenskaya railroad they got onto a freight train on which they, passing the cities of Minsk, Bobruysk and Zhlobin, reached the city of Gomel in the Mogilevskaya Province where, at the limit of their physical and moral endurance, they decided to settle.

Meanwhile, my transport with refugees was moving slowly to the north. In Petrograd it was met by the Head of the Union of Cities, Count Tolstoy and a representative of the OZE. I used the time of the stop of our transport in Petrograd to see my brother David. I found him standing in the doorway of our house from which he feared to leave, stunned by the enormous traffic of the big city, which he ran into for the first time - the uninterrupted flow of people, carriages and electric trams which moved along Sadovaya street, one of the liveliest arteries of Petrograd.
David told me that he had already begun to attend the class in the Rozhdestvenskoye Commercial Institute, on Staro-Petergofsky Prospect, in which the pupils coming from Wilno were placed.
In the newspapers there was already information about the occupation of the city of Wilno by the Germans, but we still did not know of the catastrophic events of which our family fell victim.
The absence of any news from them disturbed me, to be sure, since David told me that our parents planned to leave from Berkovshchizna within a few days after his departure and to settle in Lyuban, several stations from Petrograd, on the Petrograd-Moscow (Nikolayevskaya) railroad.
I accompanied the transport of refugees, which headed for the city of Vologdy only as far as Yaroslavl, since my studies at the university were about to begin and I had to return to Petrograd.

The university was situated on the shore of the Neva river, on Vasilyevskoye Island, in the enormous palace of Menshikov, an associate of Peter the Great and the all-powerful favorite of the Czaritsa Catherine I, exiled to Siberia by her successors. The building of the university astonished me with the length of its main corridor, on both sides of which were located the lecture halls and along which students strolled in crowds.
The students wore uniforms established by the Ministry and in full dress uniform even a sword went with the long frock coat, but the majority wore short jackets.
The mood of the vast majority of students was reflected by the fact that the very small, reactionary-minded fraction, the so-called "academists", who considered that universities exist for study only and who could be distinguished by the long full-dress coats they wore, did not venture to appear in the hallway, since the majority would beat them up and force them to leave the university.
A little later I was to acquaint myself closely with the students of Germany and Poland. Nowhere else were the students so permeated with ideals of freedom, love of man and faith in mankind and nowhere did they seek out the truth to that extent.

Nowhere did injustice and need find such a ready response as among the students of Russia.

Looking back, I recall with what awe were the ideas of Marxist Socialism then surrounded. The majority of students had no doubts that socialism was a panacea against all the calamities which tormented the human race.

It was their belief that socialism would not only liquidate poverty, having removed social inequalities and injustices, but also, having restored personal freedoms and the brotherly abiding together of peoples, it would eliminate the danger of war and would resolve the problem, especially near to the heart of the Jews, of the so-called minorities and with this would put an end to anti-Semitism.

To the verity that Marx turned out to be a false teacher and a false prophet and that socialism did not justify our hopes in even the slightest measure, inexorably speaks the fact that in Russia, after sixty years of Socialism, it brought: a moral prison and compulsion to the population of Russia, while it preserved the old inequalities, along with still greater material deprivation; to the surrounding peoples - enslavement; and to the Jews - instead of the Czarist, predominantly governmental ani-Semitism, a more active universal one.*4

The anti-governmental sentiments of the students were muted, to be sure, by patriotic feelings during the war, but nevertheless we continued to boycott professors whom the Ministry of Education, infringing on the autonomy of the universities, appointed to occupy chairs which had become open.

The rector of the university was Edwin Davidovich Grimm. Not all the names of the professors are preserved in my memory. I remember that Professor Pokrovsky taught the History of Roman Law; the History of the Philosophy of Law and the Encyclopedia of Law - Professor Petrazitsky; Financial Law - Professors Khodsky and Migulin; Criminal Law Professor Deryuzhinsky; Statistics - Professor Yansen; and International Law - Professor Nolde. I also recall Professors M.M. Kovalevsky, D.D. Grimm and Ivanovsky, but I do not remember what subjects they taught.

The fact is that I almost did not attend any lectures. I did this not from any shortage of time, but mainly because among the students of the juridical department the opinion prevailed that this was an unnecessary expenditure of time, since all we needed to know for the passing of examinations could be found in the textbooks.

I attended the lectures of Professor Migulin conscientiously - he was supposed to lecture on financial law, but in actuality spoke on all kinds of timely themes of a political character. Despite the fact that Migulin was a professor by appointment, whom we boycotted in the beginning, he packed the largest lecture halls since, possessing an exceptional speaking talent, he could attain the heights of eloquence speaking in the simplest language. Another eloquent lecturer, also speaking on political themes - Assistant Professor Reysner (the father of the poetess Larissa Reysner) enjoyed significantly less success among the students, and I also listened to him less than conscientiously. In contrast to Migulin, Reysner spoke as they say "beautifully". But his florid language, in which several adjectives preceded each noun, was apparently less to the taste of the students.

Now and then I attended the lectures on Russian literature of Professor Vangarov. Vangarov was a Pushkinist and belonged to a literary current, the "art for art's sake".

4*My father wrote this in 1976, even though it could be written in 1991.

In the beginning of the second half of the last century, the Russian literary critics Pisarev and Dobrolubov were not satisfied with the beautiful form of the works of the greatest Russian poet, Pushkin. Accusing Pushkin of emptiness, they asserted that art is only valuable insofar as it serves the interests of the wide masses and promotes progress. The poet Nekrasov and L.N. Tolstoy were vivid representatives of the literary school of "art for life".

The first months of our stay in Petrograd were greatly darkened by the lack of communication from our family. Only after a whole month of anxiety did we finally receive the news that they were in the city of Gomel. Soon thereafter our father came to Petrograd and we learned from him the terrifying details of what they had endured .

The war, which entered into its second year, was hardly reflected outwardly in the life of the capital. Life continued to flow, the stores were heaped with all that was needed and prices of the products had almost not changed.

Restaurants (among them the fashionable Kyuba, Donon and Medved), coffeehouses (among them the popular Pekar and Evropeyskaya) and theaters were overcrowded. To get into the Mariinsky Theater, where they put on operas and ballets was, as before, almost impossible. Meanwhile, the great debacles, the consequence of unpreparedness for a modern and prolonged war, as a result of which the Germans, having occupied Poland, Lithuania and a part of Belorussia and Volynya, advanced more than 500 kilometers into the depths of Russia, deeply agitated the public opinion of Russia.

In order to reassure the population the Czar dismissed the Minister of War, General Sukhomlinov, replaced him with General Polivanov and took over the Supreme Command himself from the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich, having appointed the latter as Main Commander of the troops operating against Turkey in the Caucasus. As Chief of Staff of the Main Commander Nicholas appointed general Alekseyev, who enjoyed the reputation of a very capable general and as such, also the confidence of the general public.

The General Headquarters -"stavka" - was transferred to the city of Mogilev on the Dnieper. Simultaneously, to mobilize all social forces for the organization of production of the indispensable weapons and ammunition for the army, [5] the Military-Industrial Committee was organized, with Alexander Guchkov, leader of the Octobrist party, at the head. Representatives of the workers (the last name of one of them, I remember, was Gvozdev), also entered into the composition of the committee.

Another question which agitated wide circles of the population then was the apathy of the military forces of our allies on the Western Front during the big advances of German troops on the eastern Front.

This question really demanded an answer because, besides the unsuccessful attempt undertaken by the English fleet in February, 1915, to force through the Dardanelles and the also unsuccessful landing following thereafter on the Gallipoli peninsula, in order to open the straits and with this a sea route for the supply of the Russians with arms and ammunition (of which they already then felt a shortage), the French undertook an advance with large forces into Champagne only in the fall.

The "Society of Anglo-Russian Rapproachment" arranged a series of meetings in order to calm the Russian public opinion. I attended one meeting in the hall of the City Duma, at which the main orator was the leader of the Constitutional-Democratic party (the Cadets), Pavel Nikolayevich Milyukov, afterwards the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the first Provisional Government. Besides him, Professor Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky, the famous economist respected by all.

---

[5] Voyenno-Promyshlenyi-Komitet

Tugan Baranovsky (we used his textbook The Foundation of the National Economy at the university), came forth in defense of the allies.

I remember that I left the meeting little satisfied after Milyukov attempted to balance the enormous efforts and sacrifices of the Russians with the fact that the English sacrificed their tradition of having an army consisting of volunteers and introduced a general military obligation.

I would like here to mention briefly the then active and influential Party of Russian Liberals, which in abbreviated form was called the Cadet Party.

When I return with my thoughts to the past and think of the political activity of the Russian intelligentsia as of a wonderful and rare phenomenon, then my thoughts fly in the first place to the political figures - the Cadets [6] All of them were highly gifted people, unimpeachably honest, inspired by the ideals of love for humanity, devoted to their native land and united by the desire to serve it.

In their hands politics was far from a "dirty business", as it is often called here and, even worse, what a majority in the United States accepts as inevitable.

One of its founders and member of the Central Committee of the Cadet Party was the Jew Maksim M. Vinavar, one of the best civil law attorneys in Russia.

The main editor of the party organ of the Cadets - the newspaper "Rech" - was the Jew Joseph Gessen. Gessen had converted to Russian Orthodoxy, but continued to consider himself a Jew and as a member of the Second Governmental Duma belonged to the Jewish faction.

The Cadets played a dominant role in the first Provisional Government, which was established after the fall of the Czarist regime.

With the advances of German troops into the depth of Russia, the infamous "Jewish pale" was abolished by the force of events in the summer of 1915. However, as before, Jews were forbidden to take up residence in the capitals - in Petrograd and in Moscow - and outside of cities and small towns.

In my time Petrograd had a large Jewish population. It was composed of persons with higher education, such as doctors, attorneys, engineers, etc. in the known free professions, of craftsmen and those merchants who had paid for a certain number of years the so-called first guild and also of a large quantity of illegals, i.e. those living in the capital without registration.

Petrograd Jewry at that time consisted predominantly of people well provided for financially and the great poverty typical of the large cities of the "pale" was completely absent in Petrograd.

Another distinguishing feature of the Petrograd Jews was that they were strongly assimilated. They spoke exclusively Russian at home, they sent their children to Russian schools, attended Russian theaters, sang Russian romances and songs, read Russian newspapers, became engrossed in reading Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and took delight in the poetry of Pushkin and Lermontov.

I do not remember in my time in Petrograd there being any kind of newspaper in the Jewish (Yiddish) language, nor there being any Jewish theatre, not even on a brief visit. As far as is known to me, the only Jewish language newspaper, the "Fraynt", which was published at the turn of the century in

---

[6] such as Milyukov, Rodichev, Shingarev, Nabokov, Maklakov, Nekrasov and Kokoshkin - to name only the most brilliant ones.

Petrograd, was compelled to move over to Warsaw in 1908 due to lack of readers.

Even magazines devoted exclusively to Jewish problems, such as Razsvet, Voskhod and the Evreyskaya Starina dedicated to questions of Jewish history, edited by S.M. Dubnov and also the sixteen volume Jewish Encyclopedia, published under the editorship of L. Katzenelson, were all issued in Russian.

In Russia as well as in Western Europe the Jewish intelligentsia, as long ago as the earliest days of the Haskala (the period of the merging of Jews into the secular culture), naively believed that, since assimilation would put an end to Jewish isolation, then even if it did not eliminate, it would at least alleviate the anti-Semitic feelings of the majority.

The tragic experience of Germany, where the complete assimilation of her Jews aroused still greater hatred, the result of which was not only the loss by the Jews themselves of their lives and of all that they had attained, but also the driving out of Jewish scholars and the burning of books of Jewish authors and thus the destruction of the Jewish contribution to the scientific and cultural achievements of the country - this shows clearly that the Jewish intelligentsia, seeing salvation in assimilation, strongly oversimplified the problem on anti-Semitism.

To the credit of the Petrograd community, which included within itself the flower of the Jewish intelligentsia of Russia, one should say that in distinction from their assimilated Polish and German compatriots, they did not suffer from an inferiority complex - these were Jews with heads held high, devoted to their people, whose interests were central in their lives.

The fact that they found themselves near the sources of authority which controlled the fate of the almost six-million strong Russian Jewry, placed a special responsibility upon them; the anti-Semitic tendencies reigning among members of the government then put before them difficult tasks, ones quite often even beyond their power.

Along with the constant struggle for the rights of their people and the attempts to avert or to alleviate the consequences of the sequential misfortunes, which the Czarist government (displaying great inventiveness in this) did not spare the Jews, the Petrograd Jewry [7] displayed much devotion and initiative. In their aspirations to improve the general conditions of their fellow Jews, they founded the following societies:

OPE - to ease access to secular education;

OZE - to organize medical help and to improve hygienic conditions;

ORT - to liquidate the anomalies created by the conditions of the Diaspora, to substitute a sound sructure and make Jewish labor more productive.

EKO - to organize emigration from the overcrowded cities and small towns and to find suitable territory for colonization.

In my time the Jewish Committee of Help for the Victims of the War, EKOPO, newly organized in Petrograd for the purpose of bringing help to refugees displaced by military operations and evictions, displayed especially tireless activity.

I would also like to mention here the work in Petrograd of the Historic-Ethnographic Society, headed by the historian Dubnov, publishing the magazine Evreyskaya Starina and the collective work of scholars (not only Jewish), as a result of which the sixteen volumes of the Jewish Encyclopedia were published under the editorship of Doctor L. Katzenelson.

---

[7] with Baron Horatsy Osipovich Ginzburg, the lawyers Vinaver, Bramson and Sliozberg, the doctors Gran, Frumkin and Brutskus and the Mason Braude at the head, to enumerate only some,

As regards to the contribution of the Petrograd community, where the intellectual elite of the Russian Jewry was concentrated, to the Zionist movement, it should be noted that it was, relatively, more than modest. The center of the Zionist movement in Russia was Odessa, where the ideologues of this movement, Akhad Haam, the great poet Byalik and one of the most dynamic Zionist leaders in Russia, Vladimir Zhabotinsky, then lived.

The reason for the relative apathy of "Petrograd" in the matter of Zionism should first of all be seen in the fact that at that time Zionism could not offer the slightest practical solution to the problems of the six-million-strong Russian Jewry - the majority of which did not tolerate any delay - and demanded from the Jewish leaders the maximum of activity and attention.

In analyzing the passivity of "Petrograd" one should take into consideration that this was the period which preceeded the declaration of Lord Balfour, which recognized the rights of the Jews in Palestine - at the time in question Palestine was a province of the Ottoman Empire.

This was a period in which the material basis as well as the political prerequisites for a mass immigration were lacking in Palestine and when the leaders of Zionism, with Theodore Herzel at the head, not being certain of the attainability of the Zionist idea, at the 6th Congress did not reject the proposition of England concerning Uganda as a territory for Jewish emigration and decided to send a commision there for investigation.

This question would not be illuminated in sufficient measure if I did not mention that, while Zionism evoked a warm response among a part of the Jewish population, mostly the petty and middle bourgeoisie, the idea of a Jewish state was met almost with hostility by the Jewish Social-Democratic party, the Bund and the "Folkists".

This attitude toward Zionism was motivated not only by the fact that it was not able to resolve the urgent problems of the Jewish masses and the difficulties of its realization, but most importantly by considerations of policy - it diverted the masses from struggle for the full emancipation of Jews wherever they resided in the Diaspora which they considered feasible, even though the Jews were doomed to remain there as a minority.

The ensuing tragic events in Europe showed clearly that the optimistic prognoses of the Bund and those in accord with them concerning the feasibility of cohabitation of the Jewish minority with a Christian majority in Europe was, unfortunately, mistaken and unfounded.

As noted previously, I attended almost no lectures at the university. A large part of the students in the juridical department worked and earned money at jobs. I, however, having grown up in an atmosphere of prosperity, never gave a thought to seeking employment. If there were no interesting lectures at the university, I usually went to the Public Library.

There, along with the works of the so-called "Westernizers", such as Gerzen "The Past and Thoughts", Chernyshevsky "What is to be done", and others, I also got acquainted with the Slavophiles [8] who said that backward and politicaly immature Russia ought to go its own way and cultivate the idea of autocracy of the Lord's anointed Czar, and not to imitate blindly the example of Western Europe.

There, reading Pisarev's "Pushkin and Belinsky" I learned of his opinion, shared also by L. Tolstoy, that not the beautiful form but the content of a literary work determines the caliber of a poet or writer, as far as it facilitates progress,.

---

[8] Aksakov, Samarin, Khomyakov and the Kireyevsky brothers.

I devoted much time to the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia, beginning with Radishev "A Journey from Petrograd to Moscow" and the Decembrists. After the death of Alexander I in 1825 and the refusal of Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich to occupy the throne, his brother, who then reigned as Nicholas I, ascended to the throne. During the transfer of power in December, 1825, a part of the St. Petersburg garrison, led by members of the Russian nobility (five of whom [9] were subseqently executed) refused to take the oath crying "Long live the Constitution" .

The fact that, as it later turned out, the soldiers were convinced that "Consitutsya" was the name of the wife of Grand Duke Constantine, points out the rift in respect to political maturity which was created between the Russian people and the intelligentsia as a consequence of the forcible imposing of the Western culture on the upper classes by Peter the Great.

This gap which was demonstrated during the uprising of the "Decembrists" and was not to be effaced in the course of the following hundred years, was, as we will see, one of the main factors leading to the events, tragic for the Russian people, when in March of 1917 the three-hundred-year-old power of the Romanovs crumbled.

In the Public Library I had the opportunity of reading the magazine "Byloye" (the Past), dedicated to the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia, which was published by the revolutionary Vladimir Burtsev in Paris. Reading "Byloye", I became acquainted with the entire gallery of revolutionaries, among whom there were many of the so-called repentant gentry. Those were people ready for the greatest sacrifices who had dedicated their whole lives to the struggle with the autocracy for the rights of the people, such as those sentenced to death for the murder of Czar Alexander II, the terrorists [10], and for the murder of Minister Van Pleve and Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich the terrorists Sazonov and Kalayev.

Their final speeches in court, the so-called last words of the accused, made an especially strong impression on me.

In the magazine "Byloye" I read a lot about the so-called Narodovoltsy (the will of the people), of the trial of 193, of the Shliselburzhtsi (those imprisoned in that jail) - Lopatin, Morozov and others, of a special type of a revolutionary, Nechayev, a predecessor of Lenin, in whose world view the idea that the end justifies the means was carried to an extreme.

There it was described in detail how the former director of the Department of Police, A.A. Lopykhin, finding himself in the same compartment with Burtsev on a train, informed the latter that Evno Azef, the head of the fighting organization of the Socialist-Revolutionary party, organizer of a number of terrorist acts against Czarist high officials, was a provocateur and a paid agent of the "Okhrana".

The Czarist government later tried Lopykhin for this. I also read about the trial of Azef by the revolutionaries and of Azef's flight. In the magazine "Byloye" there was also much about "zubatovshchina" - the drive of the "Okhrana" to penetrate the worker's organizations (such an agent was the protagonist of the bloody 9th of January, the priest Gapon) and about much else which by now has vanished from my memory.

From the library I usually would go to the "Tekhnolozhka" (Technispoon), as we called the dining room for the students of the Technological Institute, on the corner of Zagorodny and Zabalkansky. Dinner there, of soup, a meat dish with two vegetables and black bread in unlimited quantity cost about fifteen kopecks. On the days when I attended the university I dined in the dining room established for Jewish students by Baron Ginzburg, where dinner cost ten kopecks.

---

[9] Ryleyev, Pestel, Muravyev Apostol, Bestyuzhev Ryumin and Kakhovsky.

[10] Zhelyabov, Kibalchich, Mikhaylov, Sofia Perovskaya and Fanya Genfman.

As I already mentioned, the unsuccessful war was not reflected in any noticeable way in the life of the capital - perhaps only in as much as that there was more traffic in the streets and the population had sharply increased and reached three million.

In the window of the store of Elisyev on Nevsky were exhibited all kinds of delicacies - every sort of fish, caviar and foreign fruits. The restaurants, coffeehouses and theaters were overcrowded.

In Petrograd there were two theaters with a serious repertoire - the Governamental Aleksandrinsky theater with [11] in the main roles, and the little Theatre of Suvorin with Rybnikov.

In addition, the dramatic theatre named after the actress Yavorskaya was located on the Ofitserskaya Street; in it I saw the play by Maksim Gorky "The lower Dephts" in which all the parts were played by Russian writers.

A dramatic light repertory theater was located on the Nevski in the Passazh. At the time of my arrival the play " Potash and Mother-of-Pearl" enjoyed an enormous success and a little later "Roman" with Nadezhdin and the incomparable Granovskaya in the main roles.

In Petrograd there were then three permanent operas: the governmental Mariinsky Theater where the singers were guest artists, in as much as they are preserved in my memory: [12]

Performances of classical ballet were also given at the Mariinski theatre, with the scenery of the artists Leonid Bakst and Aleksander Benoit, with the dancers: [13].

Since tickets for the performances in the Mariinsky theater were always bought up by so-called profiteers, (scalpers) who then resold them for very high prices, in the whole time of my stay in Petrograd I only managed to hear Borodin's opera Prince Igor with the Polovetsky dances, with Vera Fokina and to see Tchaikovsky's ballet Swan Lake, with Gerdt and Egorova II in the main roles.

I attended the two other opera houses much more often - the Musical Drama and Narodny Dom (the People's House). In the Musical Drama in which the singers [14] sang the main roles, I heard several times my favorite opera, Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" and also "Evgeny Onegin" by the same composer, Bizet's "Carmen" and others.

I also was a frequent visitor to the Narodny Dom, where one of the few dramatic tenors in Russia performed [15] (there were many good lyrical tenors) and the subject of adoration of the students, the coloratura soprano Lidia Lipkovskaya sang the main roles.

---

[11] Davidov - "uncle Pood" (uncle Kostya - Varlamov I did not find among the living), Yuryev, Khodotov, Savina, Korchagina-Alexandrovskaya and Vedrinskaya

[12] Sobinov and Smirnov (lyrical tenors), Shalyapin (bass), Nezhdanova (coloratura soprano) in the main roles, with Dygas, Sibiryakov, Ershov, Piotrovsky, Bolshakov and Pozemkovsky (tenors), Tartakov and Karakash (baritones), Medvedev (bass) and Kuznetsova-Benua and a little later Slobodskaya (soprano).

[13] Gerdt, Romanov, Nizhinsky and Vladimirov, the prima-ballerinas Kshesinskaya, Karsavina, Pavlova, Egorova II and Vera Fokina and also with the dancers Lyuk, Spesivtseva and Obukhova in important roles with the staging of Marius Petipa and Mikhail Fokin.

[14] Brian, Davydova and Delmes and the tenors Kanshin and Karavya

[15] Ivan Alekseyevich Alchevsky (dramatic tenor) Rozhdestvensky (lyrical tenor) Bocharov, (baritone), Mozzhukhin (bass),

There I heard, along with Alchevsky, already at the sunset of his musical career, Medeya Finger in Halevy's "Zhidovka" (Jewess) and Meyerbeer's "Huguenots", the tenor Smirnov along with Kuznetsova-Benoit in "Belle Helene".

In the Narodny Dom I managed to hear Fedor Shalyapin in Musorgsky's "Boris Godunov", Gounod's "Faust" and Boito's "Mephistopheles".

To catch up with Shalyapin was not an easy task, since tickets were bought up by profiteering dealers. A small number of "lucky ones" were allowed free standing places by Shalyapin's agent, Isay Grigorevich Dvorishchin (Isayka).

My brother David, who once managed to get into the number of "lucky ones" described to me how it happened: following the example of other students he went up to Isayka who was standing at the entrance and with a deep bow he said: "Isay Grigorevich, hello" to which Isayka, with a wave of his hand, said "pass".

Despite his undoubtedly enormous gifts, Shalyapin did not enjoy great popularity among the students. They accused him, in fact, of singing only for the rich and not caring whether the student fraternity, who valued his art very much, would have the opportunity to hear him. It was also unheard of for him to appear for the benefit of charitable institutions. Only once, as an exception, did Shalyapin give a free concert, for a national teachers meeting at an all-Russian congress.

His popularity among the anti-governament-minded students was not increased by the fact that, playing the role of Ivan Susanin in Glinka's "A Life for the Czar", Shalyapin fell to his knees before Czar Nicholas, who was sitting in his theater box.

In the winter there was musical comedy with a classical repertoire in the "Palace" and in the summer in the "Letni Buff" (summer buff). [16] In the Letni Buff, in 1916, I heard the first performance in Russia of Kalman's musical comedy "Silvia" (Chardashfuerstin).

In addition, there was a number of smaller theaters with different repertoirs in Petrograd. At the time of my arrival, at the Troitsky Theater "Ivanov Pavel" ran with great success.

Almost everyone in the capital sang: "Pavlik, Pavlik, study, don't waste time, be sure not to amuse yourself and don't pick your nose", and so forth. In the Intimny Theater on Kryukov Canal, the play "Vova got adapted" ran with no less success. In it a recruit, the delicate Baron Shtrik who has grown up in luxury and excess, adapts himself to the unaccustomed, for him somewhat rough conditions in a soldier's barracks.

Speaking of theaters which I often frequented, I should mention the Pavilion de Paris, where along with numbers of a light genre, there were performances of celebrated actors of the Imperial Theaters - such as the unforgettable performance of Davydov (uncle Pood), when he read the Fables of Krylov. I also visited often the Theater Lin at Nevsky 100, where Nina Dulkevicha and Raisova performed Gypsy romances and Tarasova sang songs of the folk genre. A little later, already during the "hungry days", I repeatedly heard Sergey Sokolsky there with his witty songs on the news of the day, among which "Hey, are they or aren't they giving (food) at your place?"

---

[16] with the actors Diza, Ksendzovsky and Rostovtsev in the first and the Polish couple Nevyarovskaya and Shchavinsky in the secondary roles and with the frequent tours of the Swede Elna Gistedt.

Of the theaters which I never attended, but which merit being mentioned, describing the theatrical life in Petrograd then, I should name Krivoye Zerkalo (the Crooked Mirror) on Ekaterininsky Canal, where they put on satires, and Theater Mosolovoy on Liteyny Prospect, where Kurikhin, the famous comic, performed. I also saw Kurikhin frequently in comical scenes at the Pavilion de Paris.

To give a full picture I should mention the fashionable theater - miniature Bilbabo - on the Italyanskaya and the Villa Rode restaurant on Strelka (arrow), where a choir of Gypsies sang with Nyura Massalskaya and where Gregoryi Rasputin was a frequent guest.

Regarding music, I can recall only my summertime frequenting of concerts of the symphony orchestra under the direction of Aslanov at the railroad station in Pavlovsk.

At that time a quartet by the name of Sheremetov, with violinists Karpilovsky and Goldfayn enjoyed great renown in Petrograd. Goldfayn, who lived in the same apartment with us on the corner of Sadovaya and Voznesensky told me that he and Karpilovsky played in the evenings at the "Soleil" cinema, where silent pictures were still accompanied by music then.

The conservatory of Petrograd, with director Glazunov, inspector Gabel and the professors - the Hungarian Jew Leopold Auer for violin class and the Italian Ferni Geraldoni for singing class, was then at the zenith of its fame.

From the class of L. Auer came violinists of world fame, such as Misha Elman, Nathan Milstein, Jasha Haifetz (a native of Wilno) and others. In connection with the fact that it was not easy to get into the conservatory, rumor had it that the favor of the head of the Russo-French bank, Dimitry Rubinstein, who enjoyed a doubtful reputation, but donated large sums to the Conservatory, could be very useful.

The galleries of the Hermitage, bordering the Winter Palace, with pictures of foreign masters on religious themes, predominantly from the epoch of the Renaissance, attracted me less, I remember, than the "Museum of Alexander III" with pictures on themes nearer to my taste, of Russian artists [17] I would like to relate an unusual story, which took place before my eyes.

During the first, relatively idle year of my stay in the capital, I often met with a girl, Sonya Geltser, then a pupil of the last class of the Stoyuninaya Gymnasium, in which girls from rich families of the capital studied. Sonya, herself also a daughter of wealthy parents, was a native of the city of Vitebsk and not long prior to our meeting moved to a permanent residence in Petrograd together with her entire family.

Natasha, a bosom friend of Sonya's, with whom she had acquainted me, also attended the Stoyuninaya Gymnasium and was the daughter of the rich engineer Denisov, well known in the capital.

In the words of Sonya, Natasha and her sister Valya were the daughters of Shapiro, a Jewish assistant professor of one of Petrograd's institutions of higher education, who committed suicide for reasons unknown to me. Engineer Denisov, who still as a student was a friend of the family of assistant professor Shapiro, married the widow Shapiro and adopted her daughters. I do not know exactly in what way Denisov obtained his riches and of what they consisted. I only know that, besides a large property on Golodae Island in the Neva River delta, Denisov owned the fashionable sea resort, Gurzuf, in the Crimea. Of the wealth of Denisov speaks the fact that he donated one million rubles to the newly formed Provisional Government after the fall of the Czarist regime.

---

[17] Repin, Ayvazovsky, Serov, Vasnetsov, Shishkin, Levitan, Vereshchagin, Korovin and others.

The Denisovs lived in the Czarskoye Selo, in which the permanent residence of the last Czar was located .
The Denisovs had an automobile (in Russia then still a great rarity) and their chauffeur used to work previously as the chauffeur of the Czar. In the words of the chauffer, as Sonya told me, Czar Nicholas used a lot of foul language.
During one of our meetings an agitated Sonya G. told me the following: The day before she was at the Denisovs, at Czarskoye Selo, when a violinist of the resort orchestra in Gurzuf, a certain Chernyavsky, who was not hiding his ardent feelings toward Natasha, in answer to an accusation thrown at him that he was pursuing the Denisov millions, declared that he would kill himself if this accusation was not withdrawn.
"If Chernyavsky kills himself, I too will kill myself" - I said to Sonya, wishing to soothe her.
My surprise was very great when at our next meeting Sonya told me that last evening Chernyavsky had shot himself on the threshold of the Denisov home in Czarskoye Selo.
This occurrence greatly unnerved Natasha. She dropped out of school and went to Norway to compose herself in changed surroundings.
I ran into Sonya Geltser again in 1922 in Berlin, where she emigrated along with her parents after the October revolution. Some time before Sonya G. had visited the Denisovs, who lived in Paris and, according to her, belonged to th e high-society there. In the meantime Natasha managed to marry some Rumanian prince and to divorce him.

Returning to the events on the military fronts, one should note that the Russians did manage to liquidate partially the German Novosventsyanski breakthrough and the line of the front was established as of the end of September, 1915 and through the winter on a line of Riga, Dvinsk, Wilno, Baranovichi and Tarnopol, in which Wilno and Baranovichi remained on the German side.
General Falkenhain, the German Chief of the General Staff, who had replaced General Moltke after the battle on the Marne, used the lull on the Eastern front to undertake in October of 1915 an attack along with the Austrians against Serbia, who in the fall of 1914 had smashed the attacking Austrian troops and forced them to retreat back across the Danube.
The successful operations of the two armies - the German under the command of general Galvits and the Austrian under the command of general Keves and the ensuing occupation of Serbia was facilitated by the fact that Bulgaria, led by king Ferdinand (a German by birth), simultaneously stabbed fraternal Serbia in the back.
The landing of the troops of the Western Allies, under the command of general Sarrili in Saloniki, Greece, could not avert these events. The Serbs managed to avoid encirclement however, and the remnants of their troops found refuge on the island of Corfu.
Still earlier, in May, 1915, Italy declared war on her former ally, Austro-Hungary, hoping to annex the southern part of the Tyrol, populated by Italians. However the fighting ability of the Italian troops, acting under the leadership of Chief of General Staff, general Cadorna was apparently not very great since the Austrians themselves, under the command of general Boroyevich, could cope with them without the help of the Germans.

On the front the winter from 1915 to 1916 passed relatively without changes.
The newly appointed (in place of Sukhomilov) Minister of War, General Polivanov, collaborating with the Military-Industrial Committee, used this respite well, increasing the production of arms and ammunition and supplying the army with all the necessities, so that in the early spring of 1916 the Russians were already in a condition to undertake an advance, even though without consequences, around Lake Naroch - to the east of the city of Wilno.

In March 1916 an important government decree came out which affected the students of the country and among them myself.

With the aim of filling the strongly depleted cadres of officers in the active army, by this decree the government abolished the old rule by which students of governmental institutions of higher learning were granted a deferment from the army levy until the completion by them of their higher education. The new rule made an exception only for medical students, who henceforth were granted a deferment fom army levy until the completion by them of their education.

The understandably great indignation of Jewish students was aroused by the discrimination of the new edict between the Christian students and their Jewish fellow students. At that time when the former made their way into the officer schools, the latter were drafted to serve in the army as rank and file soldiers.

Since there was no chance of getting a lecture hall assigned by the prorector for the discussion of the situation arising from the discriminating army levy, the only Jewish organization accredited at the university - the "Mutual Benefit Fund for Jewish Students", asked for and received a lecture hall for two hours for a discussion of its current business.

The lecture hall was overcrowded when the student Brusilovsky opened the meeting of the Mutual Benefit Fund and, in order on one hand to give us the opportunity to discuss the situation created by the draft and on the other hand to remove responsibility from the "Fund" for debate on a question not concerning it, he soon declared the official meeting closed.

But here something happened which no one expected.

When a representative of the Zionist students replaced Brusilovsky, (who had left the rostrum) and began to read a resolution of protest proposed by them in connection with the draft of Jewish students into the army as privates, several Marxist students flew at him and pushed him off, then one of them began to read a resolution proposed by the Marxists.

As was to be expected, the Zionists did not leave this unanswered and pushed off the Marxist, in order to be thrown off in their turn by their opponents.

In vain the party-less (I among them), who composed the vast majority, entreated at first and then, climbing on top of our desks and waving our fists, shouted: "scoundrels, scum, villains, let somebody be heard!"- nothing could halt the two relatively small handfuls of students in their drive to size the rostrum by force. This continued, in spite of our protests, until university personnel came and demanded that we clear the lecture hall, since the two hours granted us had already expired.

This tragicomic occurrence, which manifested the complete absence of self-discipline and tolerance of the politically active part of the Jewish students, aroused in me then, I remember, deep doubts concerning the Jews' possession of the ability for self-government.

I would like to add in conclusion that, despite what had happened in actuality, on the following day a text of a resolution of protest, allegedly adopted by the Jewish students in connection with the governmental decree on the draft of students into the army, was hung on the walls of the university corridor.

I should also add that the abolition of the sudent deferment did not immediately affect me personally, since my draft year, 1918, was called ahead of time only in July, 1916.

Meanwhile, Czarina Alexandra Fedorovna with the blinded persistence peculiar to those condemned from on high, was rushing toward her own ruin and that of her whole dynasty as well.

With the departure of the Czar from the capital, Rasputin, using his unlimited power over the Czarina, became in fact the ruler of the destinies of the country.

In a short time the ministers were replaced by Rasputin's henchmen, for the most part conscienceless careerists and adventurers. At the beginning of the year Premier Kokovtsev, having replaced the murdered Stolypin, was retired and replaced by Gromykin in his turn.

We did not then suspect that the replacements at the post of Premier occurred upon the demand of the Czarina, who was carrying out the will of Rasputin (as Kokovtsev hints in his memoirs).

Goremykin, who previously had replaced Kokovtsev at the post of Premier, was also set aside.

Boris Stuermer, a henchman of Rasputin's, little known in the country and a German by descent was appointed the new Premier and soon took over also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Sazonov. Speaking of the foreign policy of Russia one should note that, in connection with the defeats at the front, the circles close to Rasputin (who from the very beginning was an opponent of the war), began to talk strongly about the need of concluding a separate peace with Germany, in violation of the obligations assumed by Russia toward her allies. This persuasion went against the beliefs without exception of all the political parties of the country who saw in the continuation of the war a cruel necessity, in view of the aggressive plans of Germany in respect to Russia and of the obligation assumed toward the allies.

Czar Nicholas, despite the defeats at the front, repeatedly expressed his firm intention to continue fighting the war, together with the allies, until a victorious conclusion.

But from the time of departure of the Czar from the capital to take over the Supreme Command of the armed forces, the power, judging from the last appointments, in fact moved from the hands of the weak-willed monarch into the hands of his obsessed wife, who saw in Rasputin not only the healer of her hopelessly ill son, but also the saviour of the dynasty and the country, sent to her by the Almighty.

The appointment, at the insistence of the Czarina, of the German, Stuermer, as Premier, aroused indignation in the Government Duma and was taken as a provocation hurled at the country even by the monarchist members devoted to the Czar, as well as by the whole country.

In addition, the country was filled with tales of the recurrent public declarations of Rasputin when dead drunk, bragging of his feats in the field of sexual prowess, in which he compromised even the Czarina.

These stories could not help but undermine the simple folk's cult of Czar, the "Little Father". Meanwhile, events began at the front which riveted the attention of the country and with this postponed for some time the epilogue of the evolving drama, the main protagonists of which were the last of the Romanov dynasty.

However, before turning to the events at the fronts I would like to return to events in my personal life.

At that time Aaron Moiseyevich Eysurovich, the future husband of my sister Emma, also resided in Petrograd on Tritskaya street at the Jewish rail engineer Zhukovsky's, as a "doorkeepers subject". Aaron Moyseyevich was born in 1881 in Simferopol in Tavricheskaya Province.

From his mother, a Crimean Jewess, he inherited a very dark color of skin. Aaron M. was the owner of a technical bureau in Wilno. After the arrival of my sister from Paris he courted her and proposed to her still before our departure from Wilno.

Aaron M. found himself in Petrograd on the following business. The Rabinovich brothers resided in Wilno before the war - they had the reputation of smart dealers with doubtful ethics, but capable and with a wide scope of interests. One of them was the father of Jascha R. who, as I already mentioned, helped me with lodging during my first attempt of enrolling at the university.

After the outbreak of the war the Rabinoviches moved to Petrograd and there founded an enterprise under the name of "Northern Joint-Stock Company", to exploit the patent of Captain Langovy for armor-piercing bullets. The Rabinoviches engaged as chairman of the new company a member of the court clique, Prince Putyatin, who helped them, it is to be supposed, to receive - still without having a factory for production - a large order for armor-piercing bullets and an advance of several million rubles from the Main Artillery Management.

By the time of my arrival in Petrograd the family of Jascha Rabinovich was already renting the apartment previously occupied by the Governor of Tver - eighteen rooms on Liteyny Prospect and spent the summer of 1915 in Czarskoye Selo. As the technical director, the Rabinoviches enlisted the owner of the chocolate factory "Victoria" in Wilno, the engineer David Bunimovich (son of the banker), who in his turn enlisted Aaron M. for the business of supplying the enterprise with technical materials, of which an acute shortage could already be felt then. Aaron M. often took David and myself to the best restaurants, such as the "Company of Waiters" on Sadovaya and "Vienna" on Gogol street, which enjoyed popularity among the Bohemians - of this testified the signed pictures and portraits of the artists hanging on the walls.

During the first year of our stay in Petrograd we did not have any monetary worries, since we received all the necessary means from our parents. Besides that, thanks to the following occurrence we could allow ourselves some excesses.

Several months after our arrival we changed our apartment for a better one and took up residence with a childless Russian couple on Ekaterinsky Canal, near Sennaya Square.

The landlord, serving in the "Governing Senate", as well as the landlady, the owner of a tailoring shop, treated us very warmly and cordially and David and I felt very comfortable there.

The landlady had a weakness however, from which she could not extricate herself - that of playing the pari-mutuel at the races - as a result she regularly lost all the money she earned with hard work.

The races (a competition of horses harnessed in two-wheeled carts with jockeys), with prizes and a pari-mutuel, were very popular then in Petrograd and despite the war took place regularly on the Semenovsky Parade Ground, into which Nikolayevskaya street turned, leading into it from Nevsky Prospect.

The stables of Prince Vorontsov-Dashkov, with the famous jockeys William Keyton and his two sons, of Telegin with the no less famous Jewish jockey Alexander Finn and that of Lezhnev were the best at that time and the horses from these stables were considered "favorites".

The skill of the jockey consisted in his ability to force the horse to run at a trot and, not moving into a gallop, to develop maximum speed (a gallop disqualified a horse). I remember that, when the horse Taloni from the stable of Vorontsov Dashkov ran, then there was no parimutuel, since there was no case when it did not come in first. I also remember that Alexander Finn won in Moscow, in 1916, the biggest prize of the year - 50,000 rubles, named for

Empress Maria Fedorovna, on the horse Pevny from Telegin's stable. I met A. Finn thirty years later in Italy, where he still took part in races in Milano. In contrast to our landlady who, despite the fact that each time, after her sequential loss, she swore that "no more would her foot step onto the cursed field", the following Sunday would again bring her earnings there,

I visited the Semenovsky Parade ground repeatedly, but did not bet on the pari-mutuel even once. Confirmed gamblers never bet on the "favorites", since the pari-mutuel paid off a gain little bigger than the stake. It was possible to make much money when a horse won which, judging objectively, had no chance of winning - a so-called "fluke". In one such case I was a witness when the pari-mutuel paid out 350 rubles for each ten wagered. The general public regarded the Jockeys with great distrust, suspecting them of conspiring among themselves and that from time to time they "let pass" a so-called "fluke", on which they bet through figureheads.

In one case, when a horse on which Finn rode began to lag, I heard shouts from the stands where the public sat: The damned Jew is selling out, selling out!"

I generally was not a gambler by nature, since, apparently, I subconsciously was not an optimist and did not believe that I would have any special luck. This feature of my character is confirmed by the following occurrence.

Once, when I returned home around midnight and David was already sleeping, I agreed, at the request of the landlady, to join the guests gathered at her place on the occasion of her birthday. A little later I also agreed to join those playing cards - "twenty-one".

Here happened something that is hard to explain - the cards went so for me that, even though the stakes were not large, by morning, when we broke off in order to have breakfast, I won around 600 rubles.

After breakfast, feeling somewhat awkward, I proposed to continue the game in order to give my partners a chance to recoup their losses. In the course of one hour, playing very carelessly, I lost around 250 rubles, so that when we separated I remained with winnings of 350 rubles.

My brother David could not believe his eyes when, waking up, he saw the large bundles of money which I, entering the room, threw on the bed.

350 rubles was a large sum then, if one takes into consideration that for one ruble it was possible to eat six-seven substantial meat dinners at the "Technolozhka", and the average student could live a whole year on this sum.

As a rule, such successful debuts of beginners lead to an overestimation by the "lucky ones" of their chances for winning in the future and, becoming keen on the game, they inevitably run into the "variability of fortune" and in the end pay dearly for their not entirely substantiated optimistic expectations.

If not pessimism, then my innate sobriety must have prevented this occurrence from pushing me in the direction of gambling. All my life I avoided games of chance and never attempted to improve my financial position by buying lottery tickets. In this particular case I am beholden to this innate sobriety for the fact that these fortuitous monies were used by me in order to add pleasure to our lives. Thanks to these fortuitous monies David and I, I remember, could allow ourselves to meet the New Year (1916) in a restaurant with music in the company of two friends of David from the Commercial Institute whom we invited. A little later I could hear F. Shalyapin three times in the Narodny Dom.

As I already mentioned, despite the war and defeats life flowed normally in the capital and, on this background, in the course of my first year as a student I lived a full and, thanks to parental financial help, also a lighthearted life, in which girls played an important role; I took advantage of the breadth of opportunities which the capital, as a cultural and political center, presented me.

Despite the fact that, actually, I did not study, this year did not pass in vain in the sense of self-education, since I read and listened a lot. The fact also should not be underestimated that during that year I, an eighteen-year-old youth out on my own for the first time, acquired life experience which, as the incident with engineer Kozovsky showed, I still strongly needed.

Looking back, I also remember how for the first time I very much missed my native city, how remembering it while walking along the granite Angliyskaya embankment on foggy evenings, it seemed to me, seen from a "beautifying distance", so impressive and big (quite undeservedly, as I would see upon returning), and mainly dear and native. Meanwhile, at the university, where I continued to be an infrequent guest, the time of the year-end examinations was approaching.

According to the rules instituted at the university, in order to receive a pass for the two semesters and to be promoted to the second year, it was sufficient in the first year to pass an examination in only one subject (the maximum was three examinations).

With the aim to satisfy the minimum of demands, I decided to pass the examination on Statistics which was considered the relatively easier one of the first year courses.

When, in accordance with my decision, I signed up for the examination in the office, I do not remember what made me sign up also for the examination on Political Economy, two weeks later.

This supplementary deadline turned out to be a lifesaver since the examination on Statistics I, so to say, failed with a "crash". I failed for two reasons: despite the fact that I had more than enough time for preparation, by my own thoughtlessness I went to the examination poorly prepared and, in addition, I pulled out one of the two question cards which I intended, but did not manage, to go over. In addition, I ended up with Assistant-Professor Bukovetsky, who was deservedly considered a strict examiner.

This great failure forced me to take hold of myself and come out of a pleasant, to be sure, but essentially idle life and, in the comparatively short time of two weeks prepare myself [18] for the examination on Political Economy, which I passed well with Assistant-Professor Menkov.

I soon realized that it was high time for me to take leave of an idle and carefree life when, having received the credit needed for promotion to the second year, I went to the city of Gomel to spend the summer vacation with my parents. A little earlier, my brother David came there after having graduated from the Rozhdestvenkoye Commrcial Institute. However, before moving to a description of my life in the city of Gomel, I want to devote several lines to the events on the military fronts in 1916.

Military events on the Western Front began in 1916 with an advance of large German forces aimed at seizing the strategically very important fortress of Verdun.

The military actions at Verdun continued uninterruptedly for more than half a year and, in spite of the extraordinary persistence, the readiness for great sacrifice and the heroism displayed by the Germans, their efforts foundered on the unbending will of the French who, under the skillful command of General Petain, also not stopping at any sacrifices, successfully defended every inch of their soil.

---

[18] with the textbooks Foundation of the National Economy by Professor Tugan-Baranovsky and The History of Economic Studies by Professor Chuprov,

The battle of Verdun will enter into the history of trench warfare of 1914-1918 as one of the bloodiest, in which millions of men - the flower of European youth - after months of unbelievable physical deprivations and the horrors of hurricane bombardments, went to their deaths without a murmur, pushed by some unexplicable force.

When one recalls this event, the feeling of horror is joined by the feeling of hopelessness of the doomed at the thought that pacifism, to which, waking from a bloody nightmare, the victorious people turned to search of an instrumentality which would avert a repetition of the cataclysm they had endured, only hastened the Second World War with its still greater sacrifices and destruction, as well as the new horrors of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In order to weaken the pressure of the Germans at Verdun, the English undertook an attack with large forces on the river Somme. Other than tying up the German military forces on the sector of the front neighboring Verdun, this attack, despite the great English efforts and sacrifices, did not bring about any territorial changes at the front.

The coordinated operations of the Allies, including the Russians, (of which there will be more later), forced Germany to cease its efforts at Verdun without achieving the intended goal.

The Chief of the German General Staff, General Falkenstein, as the initiator of this fruitless and, in the sense of heavy losses of life, expensive operation, had to leave the position occupied by him. He was replaced by General Hindenburg, or rather in reality by his assistant, General Ludendorf, who in a short time achieved the power of a dictator in Germany. In addition to the attack near Lake Naroch in March of 1916 already mentioned by me, at the end of May (by the old calendar) the Russians undertook an attack with large forces on the Western and South-Western Front, this time answering the call for help not only of France but also of Italy which was successfully attacked by Austro-Hungary. The two Russian attacks under the command of general Evert on the Western front were repulsed by the Germans near Baranovichi with enormous losses for the Russians. On the South-Western front, where the troops found themselves under the command of general Brusilov, who had replaced general Ivanov, the Russians, attacking with four armies [19] had great successes especially on those sectors where they fought the Austrians.

The latter three armies who operated against the Austrians in Galicia and Bukovina, shattered the enemy and, having taken over 400,000 prisoners, advanced successfully - especially the one of General Lechitsky, which, acting in the very South, managed to occupy all of Bukovina with its capital, the city of Chernovitsy. The movement of the army of general Kaledin, acting in the Northern sector of the Southwestern Front, after preliminary successes and the occupation of a number of citiies, (Lutsok, Dubno and others) was checked by German forces under the command of gen. Lisingen on the line of the Stokhod River.

All the efforts of the Russians who, in stubborn, prolonged battles lasting many weeks, disregarding losses which were very great, attempted to break through the German line of defense, foundered on the steadfast resistance of the defenders, who were also helped by the local natural conditions - an abundance of completely impassable swamps.

The successes of Russian troops on their border in Bukovina pushed Rumania to enter the war on the side of the Allies at the end of July, 1916.

However, the attacking Rumanian forces, on the point of entering Austrian Transylvania populated predominantly by Rumanians, were smashed, in the complete passivity of the Salonika army of General Sarrail, by the Germans operating together with the Bulgarians from the South under the command of gen. Makensen and from the North under General Fankelhein.

As a result all of Rumania, with the exception of its North-Eastern part, was occupied by Germany, who took over the Rumanian wheat and oil, greatly needed by the Central Powers as a consequence of the sea blockade conducted by England.

The entrance of Rumania brought Russia only the lengthening of the front and increased worries instead of relief.

In connection with the ease with which the Germans put Rumania out of action, jokes were told in Russia that "the Rumanians fought only till seven in the evening, because after that they

---

[19] of generals Kaledin, Sakharov, Shcherbachev and Lechitsky

played violins in the restaurants" or " Rumanians, that's not a people but a profession", and so forth.
The advance of Brusilov, fizzling out by autumn, the successes of which were paid for with disproportionately high losses - more than a million wounded and killed - did not resolve the problems of Russia, especially since their center of gravity moved from the fronts to the inside of the country.

However, prior to turning to these problems, I would like to devote several lines to the happenings of my personal life in the summer of 1916.

DOOMED MONARCHY

My visit to Gomel
Description of family life
Anxiety about draft-age sons
Financial difficulties, looking for work
Taking post of clerk at the remote Obukhovsky factory
Observation of the character of the Russian worker
Inflation, shortages
Government corruption (Rasputin)
Cadet party, Milyukov's speech
The Czarist couple's blindness
Protests, strikes
Demonstrations on Znamenskaya square
Experience with Cossack

DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Events of February, March of 1917
Collapse of autocracy - absence of police
Burning police station, district court
confused shooting
Exultation, street experiences
Governmental Duma assumes authority
Moderates attempts to avoid shocks fatal for the war effort
Abdication of the Czar on March 2nd, 1917
Formation of Provisional Government
Two authorities- Duma and Soviet
Joyful enthusiasm
Problems of Provisional Government
Milyukov and Kerensky
Revolution eventually brought military defeat and bolshevism
Lenin engendered Hitler
Milyukov ignored the demoralization of army
Kerensky proposes "peace without annexations"
Germany rejects peace offer, injects Lenin into Russia
The figure of Kerensky
Genghis Khan and Peter the Great
Chats on Znamenskaya square
Revolutionary Democrats irreparable mistakes
Suppression of Kornilov's attempt at military dictatorship

The city of Gomel, of the Mogilevskaya Province, where my family took up residence as refugees, was known mainly in connection with a pogrom against Jews there in 1905; like all the other large cities of the "pale" it had a large Jewish population. Upon their arrival there, my family rented two rooms from a Jewish family with the right to use the kitchen in the house of Doctor David Zakharin on Rumyantsevskaya, the main street of the city.

Upon arriving in Gomel I found that my family was adapting themselves well to unaccustumed life conditions - having to live in only two rooms, even if large ones, my mother managed, with the help of a servant, to set up a tolerable household.

In contrast to the uneducated Jewish poor who, in many cases treated the flood of refugees almost with hostility, the Jewish intelligentsia as well as the prosperous class was sympathetic and friendly - my family made social contacts without difficulty. In addition, my family made contact with other refugees from the city of Wilno then living in Gomel: the chief Rabbi, Chaim-Ozer Grodzensky, the co-owner of the Kurlyandski oil-mill, Isaac Trotsky and his son, Doctor Falk, Doctor Rafelkes, and the family of the owner of the largest textile firm in Wilno, Meer-Oren Katsenelenbogen. Since my sister Anya had volunteered to work wituout pay at the local Jewish hospital, my sister's new acquaintances consisted primarily of Jewish physicians. My father, as the elected chairman of the Committee of Refugees being organized in the city of Gomel, came into contact with the representatives of the Jewish community and became a friend of the leader of Gomel Jewry, Nota Pevzner (the grandfather of the head of Israeli "Solel-Bone", David Hakohen and of Ahad Haam's daughter-in-law, Ginosar).

However, since he had no chance to be incorporated into the local economy, my father had absolutely no income; the whole numerous family had to subsist on what they brought from Wilno and since, contrary to expectations, the war dragged on without any sign of its ending in the near future, the life of the whole family was shadowed by some concern.

For my father this was deepened by his anxiety for his draft-age sons which did not leave him day or night - all around us a war went on to which no end could be seen.

One should take into consideration that, during the First World War, the chances were minimal for those going into the battle lines to return alive and without serious mutilations. Evaluating the activity of the Czarist government in this period it is appropriate to note that it displayed a criminal apathy in the matter of preparing the country for a war generally expected. As a result of this inactivity the Russian soldier literally had to repell with his bare hands an enemy armed to the teeth. Nevertheless, not sparing its time and strength, the Czarist government did everything in its power to kill among Jewish parents any kind of desire to send their sons to die for the native land which was for them a cruel stepmother. My parents were not an exception in this and when, upon their arrival, a review of "white cards" given to those unfit for military service was announced, my father did not spare any efforts and money to have my brother Yefim's "white card" confirmed.

My father's agitation reached its apogee when in July of 1916 those born in 1897 were called to military service ahead of schedule. I did not object (as I did a year later when, after the fall of the Czarist regime, I became a citizen with full rights) when my father, having secured the support of the Chairman of the Military Precinct, the marshal of nobility Stosh, payed the precinct doctor 3,000 rubles and obtained the deferment of my draft for one year on the basis of my heart ailment.

An important event for our family took place in Gomel in 1916: in August of that year my older sister Emma married Aaron Moyseyevich Eysurovich. After the wedding, which was celebrated modestly in our rooms, the newlyweds went to Petrograd where they took up residence in the center of the city on Troitskaya Street, between Nevsky and Pyat Uglov (five corners), in the apartment of engineer Zhukovsky, where Aaron M. had already lived before. My brother David, having graduated from secondary school, was accepted to the Medical Department of the private Psycho-Neurological Institute in Petrograd, at the head of which stood the famous psychiatrist academician Bekhterev - he was planning to go there as the beginning of the academic year drew close. It should be noted here that whereas the study of medicine required the presence of David in Petrograd, the study by me of jurisprudence, did not demand my presence in the capital, as I well knew. To complete the picture I should add that the financial situation of our family deteriorated considerably during the last year.

None of the members of our family - partly by the force of circumstance, partly, looking back, from lack of preparation as a consequence of an impractical education, class bias and false shame - was earning any money. The money brought with us soon dwindled as a result of the devaluation of the ruble and loss of its buying power, and also because of my father's large payments for the freeing of his sons from the draft.

With the approach of the new school year it became clear to me that my upkeep in Petrograd, where my stay was not indispensable, was an expenditure little justified in the present circumstances. I arranged with my father that I would go to Petrograd to take care of all the required formalities at the university, to sign up for courses and the like, but would remain there only if I managed to find some kind of a paying job. I went to Petrograd with the firm intention to become independent and to cease to be a burden for my parents. Many of my fellow-students were earning money even in the gymnasium by giving lessons to the less able pupils, but I personally had never tried to earn any money. Since the possibilities of my finding a livelihood were limited, I began to seek work as a tutor, despite the fact that I had no experience in this field. Having no acquaintances who could help me, I began to respond to newspaper advertisements. The houses where I ended up at were predominantly those of very wealthy, titled persons and of higher officials on which, judging by the results, I did not make the necessary impression.

After several weeks of futile attempts of finding work as a tutor, I began to look around for other possibilities.

For many years Germany had been Russia's almost only supplier of machines of any kind, their spare parts, and also of technical products. In addition, wanting to retain the enormous Russian market, Germany managed, in many cases through thrusting unfavorable trade agreements upon Russia, to hinder the creation and development in Russia of a machine-building capacity and the production of technical materials.

With the outbreak of the war and the loss of her main supplier, Russia began to experience a continuous, acute shortage of technical materials and products. At that time I knew people in a technical office which, like every other, was experiencing difficulties in supplying technical goods to its clients, the industrial enterprises.

The proprietors of this office proposed that I seek out the scarce objects on commission, making the rounds of the Petrograd warehouses. I remember that I undertook this business with all my energy - traveling all over Petrograd, I visited almost all the technical offices and warehouses. However, after several weeks of futile searches, not having earned a single copeck, I was compelled to abandon this business, which turned out to be not at all easy,

My failures aroused in me doubts concerning my abilities to ever make a living and, not knowing what to do, I fell into despair. Many students worked at various jobs, but I personally did not know how to find such work.

At this time, my father came to Petrograd because of the sequential draft call of one of his sons, this time of my brother David. My brother David, a medical student, but of a private rather than a public Institution of Higher Learning, had no draft deferment. David was strongly myopic, however, and this impairment exempted him from military service according to the rules binding at that time. After verification at the Nikolayevsky Military Hospital which confirmed David's strong myopia, he was freed from the draft.

Prior to my father's return to Gomel I assured him, with tears in my eyes, that my lack of success should not be ascribed to insufficient efforts or the lack of abilities, but rather to bad luck, I asked him to grant me one more month in order to achieve independence. It so happened that in the beginning of October, right after the departure of father, David was offered the position of a clerk at the Obukhovsky Gun factory, which I took instead of him, since his medical studies demanded regular attendance at the Institute and zealous study.

This work was connected with the construction on the Neva of a regional Hydro-Electric station by the "Company of the 86th Year" - the owner of the central electrical station of Petrograd on the Obvodny Canal, headed by engineer Ulman (later the president of independent Latvia).

The construction of the main concrete and iron building was carried out by a Jewish contractor, the engineer Zeligman, who was my employer. The pay for the work was tolerable - 120 rubles a month, but the other conditions were hard.

The Obukhovsky factory was located far outside the city - in the village of Murzinka and in order to get there one had to travel about an hour by a small "steam engine" (tram cars with a little locomotive at the front), which left from Nevsky around Znamenskaya Square. All this would not have been so bad if only the engine had left regularly and one did not have to stay for a long time on sidings in subzero temperatures in unheated cars awaiting a "steamer" coming from the other direction, since the route was only one track. In addition, in order to get to the place of work one had to cross the Neva on foot on the ice in the course of the six winter months when the river was frozen.

The winter was especially severe that year and the passage across the Neva on the ice was particularly agonizing when winds joined the frost of often 40 degrees Reaumur (50 degrees centigrade) below zero.

As I recall it now, as soon as I would go down onto the ice, my face was enveloped as if by flame and, hurling myself at a run to the other shore, in order to alleviate the unbearable pain I simultaneously rubbed my face with my hands. The ends of my fingers, despite warm gloves, were so agonizingly frozen that I was compelled to stick them systematically into my mouth to warm them.

To cap it all, it was neccessary to work under an enormous shed with which they covered the construction in order to have the possibility to work in the winter and, leaving at seven o'clock in the morning and returning late in the evening, I had to eat dry food all day, until they organized a dining room. As we can see, not only were these work conditions extreme for me, a coddled "mama's boy", but even evaluating them objectively, one had to admit that they were hard. But, in my drive to independence, did work conditions really exist that would be unacceptable to me?

I worked for ten months at the Obukhovsky Factory and there I first ran into workers of various nationalities - Russians, Letts, Estonians, Tartars, residents of Turkestan (Sarty, Uzbeks and others, even Chinese) in their national dress.

The Russian workers were peasants - Velikorosy, who, not having broken their tie to the soil, were leaving for the winter for the so-called seasonal industry; the thing that astonished me about them was that each province had its special trade. If he was from Kostromskaya he was a carpenter, from Tverskaya - he was a mason, from Smolenskaya - he was a digger, from Ryazanskaya he was a plasterer and so forth.

According to my observations, the Russian worker was outstanding for his exceptional capacity for work when he was paid by the job - a mason would lay ten times more bricks in a day when paid by the job than when he worked by the day - in the latter case he would contrive to do nothing, however much you tried to supervise him.

But that notwithstanding, he was a worker who knew his trade well. We convinced ourselves of this when excavating for the foundation. The soil of Petrograd, as is well known, is unstable and swampy, but when the Smolensk digger dug - and he dug with a shovel since we did not have mechanical excavators, he contrived to work so that the soil under his feet, on the bottom, remained more or less dry.

We had the imprudence of replacing them with the Chinese, whom it was not necessary to watch and urge on, since they were outstanding in the systematicity of their work and their discipline.

The result was very sad, however - they so gouged the bottom with their digging that we had to stop work, since one could get stuck in the ditches. Since it was impossible to communicate directly with the Chinese - they did not understand the Russian language, a translator, a Chinese from Kharbin, would install them at work. The only Russian words they knew were "curse words" which they shouted angrily, spitting in their fists, when the Russian workers would tease them, calling them "khodya, khodya", as the Russians nicknamed the Chinese.

I personally had an amusing incident with a Chinese. Before his departure for the city the translator ordered one of the Chinese to bring coal for the stove in my office. The Chinese brought the coal but, when he did so again, I told him that it was not neccessary to bring more coal. But these words of mine apparently inspired him to carry in even more unneeded coal for me and, in spite of my explanations and exhortations, he continued to do this until the translator came.

Of the other nationalities who worked systematically, regardless of whether they were paid by the day or by the job, as far as I remember there were the Letts and the Estonians or, as we called them, chukhontsi.

Meanwhile, in the country events were gathering of a far from humorous character. Turning first to the description of the economic situation of the country at that time, one should note that the relative stability of prices for commodities in wide demand in the course of the first year and a half of the war could be explained mainly by the following causes. The Russian governmental treasury entered the war with large accumulated monetary reserves, which gave it the possibility of financing the war expenditures at first without increasing the monetary circulation in the country. Moreover, to begin with the railroads still had rolling stock (engines, freight and passenger cars) in good condition and in sufficient quantity and thus could, along with satisfying the demands of the front, cope relatively well with the fulfillment of their basic function - the transportation and distribution of goods throughout the country. A year after the declaration of war I had the opportunity to convince myself personally that the passenger trains plied with great punctuality when I traveled from the city of Wilno to Petrograd. In the course of the second year of the war, however, a sharp deterioration ensued in the financial-monetary position of the country as well as in the work of the railroads.

Having exhausted the monetary reserves, the government was compelled to finance the war with the printing of money - the increase of the quantity of money in circulation entailed its devaluation and with this the growth of the commodity prices.

Prices rose especially for the industrial objects which in peacetime were imported from abroad, predominantly from Germany and in which an acute shortage was felt.

But the increase in prices for these objects would not be too serious if a shortage of replacement parts for machines had not simultaneously hindered the functioning of industry and was not reflected perilously in the inability of the railroads to repair engines and cars.

As a result, by the end of the second year of war, more than half of the engines and cars were not serviceable and the shortage of means of transportation led to an uneven distribution of supplies and to a shortage of even those products in which the country had a surplus.

The supplying of the three-million population of Petrograd, lying far to the North, with provisions and its large-scale industry with raw material and fuel (coal from the Donbass), became an assignement beyond the strength of the railroads.

The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the population began to buy goods to protect themselves from losses connected with the devaluation of the ruble.

For what reason I do not remember but, wishing to preserve the value of their money, the population then bought goods, not gold coins as they did during the Second World War. I remember that in the same spirit my father bought a carload of caustic soda, which the Belgian firm of Lyubimov and Solve was then producing in Bakhmut.

It will be superfluous to say that, with the removal of great quantities of goods from the market for speculative purposes and the creation of an artificial demand and an increase in prices, the economic situation deteriorated even more.

By the time of my arrival in the fall, speculative deals took on a mass character in Petrograd.

The coffeehouse of the European Hotel was the favorite place where speculative deals were accomplished - usually the purchase or sale of the duplicate of a railroad invoice made out to the bearer for a loaded railroad car of some kind of merchandise.

The duplicates of the invoices changed owners and earned money on goods which usually neither the seller nor the buyer had ever seen with their own eyes and they often did not even know their destination.

They told a funny story about this in Petrograd: one lady, comfortably ensconsed with her friend in the then popular "Pekar" cafe said that "yesterday her son-in-law sold two carloads of diabetes and made a nice profit on it".

But Russia's problems were not confined to limping transportation, the devaluation of money and speculation on goods as a consequence of their shortage; it also found itself locked in mortal combat with a powerful enemy, a combat which demanded the concerted effort of all forces, material as well as volitional, of a people united in this effort.

The main problem of Russia was that, at this terrible hour for the country, it was not governed by an authority which enjoyed the confidence of the people nor was it doing everything in its power to accomplish the will of the people for victory. In fact, the country was governed by the Czarina, a German by birth (as a German prince, her brother fought on the enemy side), whom the people suspected of treachery and who in addition surrounded herself with a government of Germans and conscienceless scoundrels, all henchmen of Rasputin, the drunk and debauched partisan of the conclusion of a separate peace with the enemy on shameful conditions. The people in whose hands the fate of the country then found itself are eloquently characterized by the following fact which aroused general indignation in the capital: At the same time when there was an acute shortage of objects of first necessity in Petrograd due to a lack of transportation, whole trains came into the city loaded with the mineral water "Kuvaka" - not needed by anyone - from springs belonging to the Palace Comandant, General of the Cavalry Voyeykov, who as a result of this scandalous story was "awarded" the sobriquet "General of the Kuvakery".

The changes made in the key posts of government at the behest of Rasputin, such as the dismissal of ministers enjoying the confidence of society and of the

Allies, [1] and the appointment as Minister of Internal Affairs of Protopopov who was despised by everyone because of his role in secret negotiations with the Germans, were met with great indignation by all the parties in the Governmental Duma as well as by the whole country.

At that time the speeches in the Governmental Duma of members of the party of "extreme right", former ardent defenders of the monarchic idea in Russia and supporters of the Czar's throne, were in no way distinguishable by their content from the speeches of the traditional opposition. All these speeches were filled with accusations and denunciations of the government's actions. By the irony of fate the government thus managed to unite the whole country by its actions, however not in the devotion which it so sorely needed to conduct the war, but in opposition and hatred of it.

In connection with the publicity which Milyukov's speech had received and with the significance ascribed to it (several historians consider that it was in fact the beginning of the revolution), I consider it appropriate to mention a speech delivered in the Duma by the leader of the Cadet Party, Pavel Nikolayevich Milyukov, on the 15th of November, 1916 (if my memory has not betrayed me).

In his historic speech, delivered from the people's rostrum, Milyukov accused the government of a series of actions harmful to the country and, citing such facts, turned each time to the members of the Duma with the question "what is this, stupidity or treason?" There were many of these questions and all of Russia listened.

This speech, I remember, engendered a deep impression on me when I read it in the newspaper in the morning, traveling in the "little steamer" to work. I also remember that, possessing a good memory, I was able to repeat it verbatim when at work I dined together with the Shuel brothers, engineers and work superintendents.

The whole politically active part of the country's population, with the exception of the unseeing Czarist couple, felt that the country was rolling into an abyss and that radical changes were needed to avert the impending catastrophe.

Into my own hands then fell a copy of a letter which was going around the capital, of Alexander Guchkov, the leader of the moderate "Octobrist" party to gen. Alekseyev, Chief of Staff of General Headquarters, full of fears concerning the nearest future. One prophetic phrase in this letter comes to mind: "the cataclysm nears and we open an umbrella" - wrote Guchkov.

The Czarist couple, however, with the blindness of the doomed to ruin from above, remained deaf to the demands of the people and to the command of reason.

The members of the Czarist House and monarchists devoted to the throne could not help but see and feel that the situation, created in large measure by "Rasputinshchina", bore within itself an immediate fatal danger for the dynasty of the Romanovs - and that time was getting short. In accordance with this conclusion a desperate but, as history showed subsequently, belated attempt was made by these persons to avert the revolution which had been nurtured by a decade of blind and irresponsible actions of the autocratic power.

In the middle of December, 1916 (by the old calendar), Prince Felix Yusupov, the husband of the Czar's niece Irene, the daughter of the Czar's sister Kseniya, lured Rasputin to his private residence at Moyka and there, jointly with Grand Duke Dimitry Pavlovich and the leader in the Duma of the party of extreme rightist, Vladimir Purishkevich, killed him and dumped his corpse under the ice in the Neva River.

---

[1] Minister of War General Polivanov, of Foreign Affairs, Sozonov,

I will not go into the details of the killing of Rasputin here - it has already served as a theme for many books (among them by his killers Yusupov and Purishkevich) and films. I wish here merely to say that, although the news of Rasputin's death was met with a feeling of relief in wide circles of society, it did not bring the desired changes which were expected with Rasputin's departure from the scene. At that time the politically moderate element considered that in order to calm the country, the first and most urgent step was the immediate appointment of a government of persons enjoying the confidence of the people. But as before, Czar Nicholas refused to turn out of the government those who worried more about "Kuvaka" than about bread for the people and to call to power persons who could inspire the people to new sacrifices and efforts to overcome the difficulties which, with the war already in its third year, were far from small.

Anti-government feelings not only did not weaken but soon were intensified since the members of the Rasputinist clique remaining in power, with Minister of Internal Affairs Protopopov at the head and inspired by the Czarist couple, exacerbated their course still further and undertook a series of arrests.

The arrest of members of the worker section of the Military-Industrial Committee, with worker Gvozdev at the head, aroused particular indignation. In connection with the arrests of workers I remember that, on the 14th of February, 1917 (by the old calendar), I went with a crowd of students from the University to the Psycho-Neurological Institute, situated in the small town of Solyany, to a protest meeting where we were addressed by orators who called for the overthrow of the autocracy.

As I recall, a student by the name of Zvi made the concluding remarks and ended his fiery speech with the words "Liberty or Death".

The meeting ended with a demonstration - a march of about 500 students, myself included, along the streets of Petrograd - from the Psycho-Neurological Institute along Shlisselburgsky, StaroNevsky and Nevsky Prospect.

Shouting anti-government slogans along the way, we came without hindrance to the Kazansky Cathedral, where we were met and scattered by a large detail of Mounted Police. To save myself from being arrested, I entered the editorial office of the newspaper "Russkaya Volya", located near the Cathedral on Nevsky which, shortly before his appointment as Minister, Protopopov, then still the Vice-Chairman of the Governmental Duma, founded. Protopopov then enlisted a series of eminent journalists and writers of a liberal slant - among them Amfiteatrov, the author of many popular books, such as "The Eighties" and "The Nineties" into the number of co-workers of the "Russkaya Volya".

As I recall, winter was especially severe in 1917 and my daily ride to work by the little engine, which every now and then broke down, would take several agonizing hours. Given the frequent breakdowns of the little engines, people said that the machinists were conducting an "Italian strike" (slowdown). The severity of the winter had its repercussions on railroad transportation and on the supplying of Petrograd with provisions.

There was no hunger, but women had to stand in line for bread for a long time and, because of this, disorders occurred in the workers' neighborhoods.

Looking through the prism of food crises experienced subsequently by me in the course of the following decades, I should say that the provisioning difficulties of the capital at that time should be relegated to the category of relatively mild ones.

The fact that these difficulties should have had such serious consequences when at the same time the German people endured steadfastly and without a murmur the hunger caused by the blockade conducted by England, indicates clearly that the reasons for this crisis were deeper and that the fall of the Czarist regime was engendered by a number of events and facts.

The outcome of this crisis was predetermined in part by the fact that in these February days, decisive for the regime, the Czar found himself abandoned even by those who until then served as his faithful support - the members of the Czarist House, the nobility of the capital and the ardent monarchists. Even the Cossack whip which, by faithfully serving the autocracy until then, helped so successfully to hold the people to obedience, this time refused to "stroll along spines", as I too could soon convince myself.

But most fatal for the regime turned out to be the fact that the arms, which until then reposed in the hands of the handful of oppressors, because of the war were now in hands of the populace who did not defer the settling of accounts with the autocracy for its making drunkards of the people and the "drunken budgets"; for the all-Russian ignorance and illiteracy; for the 9th of February and the punitive expeditions; for the pogroms and bloody slanders; for Rasputin and Sukhomilov.

On Saturday, the 25th of February (old calendar), I was unable to go to work because of the general strike proclaimed by the workers. All week long there were disorders in the city in connection with the shortage of bread.

The hub of the agitations was Znamenskaya Square, (now renamed Square of the Uprising), near which - the Nevsky, corner of Konsistorskaya, David and I lived.

This square was intrsected by the Nevsky Prospect and on one side of it was located a station of the railroad to Moscow (then Nikolayevskaya), on the other side was located the Severnaya (Northern) Hotel.

A monument to Czar Alexander III, sitting on a horse, stood then in Znamenskaya Square, which was fated in these stormy days to become a people's rostrum and a center around which historical events took place.

Of this monument, which was considered monstrous, it was said in the capital: "A pedestal stands, on the pedestal a hippopotamus, on the hippopotamus a fool and on the fool a cap".

The day before, in Znamenskaya square, my brother David was a witness when, during a street demonstration, a Cossack killed a policeman who had just killed a woman demonstrator.

On that Saturday the 25th, when I was on the street from the early morning on, I was witness as the police, whom the people called "pharaohs", were unable to cope with the flooding onto Nevsky, from the worker's quarters, of enormous crowds of demonstrators with red flags proclaiming anti-governmental slogans - "down with autocracy" and the like.

All Saturday Nevsky belonged to the people and it was still in their hands when I returned home from my sister Emma's, who lived on Troitskaya street, a few houses from Nevsky.

On Sunday the the 26th, early in the morning, when David and I, not suspecting that changes had occurred during the night, left the house and, with several more students, began to cross Znamenskaya Square, we saw that on both sides of Nevsky soldiers were lined up who did not let anyone onto the Prospect; on the Square stood a military man with a whip in his hands who, as we later learned, was the Commander of troops of the Petrograd military district, general Khabalov. Having seen our group, Khabalov, pointing us out with his whip, gave some orders to the Cossacks mounted there, who on the spot galloped in our direction. Having taken to my heels, I was already hearing the puffing of the Cossack horse behind my back but, to my surprise, instead of a whip blow, I heard a whisper: "scatter, we won't touch you". Slipping away unharmed, David and I made our way to the house of my sister Emma by roundabout streets.

The whole day the center of Petrograd was cut off from the worker quarters in the outskirts and, in our part of the city adjacent to Znamenskaya Square, soldiers of the Semenovsky Guard Regiment, reknowned for their suppression in 1905 of the uprising in Moscow on the Presna, were directing their bayonets against the people, executing the government order unquestioningly this time too. Thus nothing foreshadowed the fall of the hated regime. On the contrary, Sunday the 26th of February, 1917 was a day of complete triumph of the autocracy, never did it present itself so powerful and unshakable before my eyes.

Returning home from Emma's late in the evening, David and I saw that Nevsky was still occupied by troops and that the soldiers, in the company of maids from the neighboring apartments, warmed themselves at bonfires they had built since the frost was bitter.

In connection with the continuing worker's strike, I did not go to work on Monday, the 27th of February. Coming out onto the street I heard rifle shots coming from the right, from the direction of Baseynaya street.

From neighbors I learned that this shooting came from the direction of the barracks of the Volynsky Regiment, which that night rose against the government.

Heading down along Nevsky, I crossed Znamenskaya Square without hindrance and it was already noon when I got to Liteyny and Vladimirsky Prospect where, at the crossing of these streets with Nevsky, a platoon of soldiers stood in a half circle under the command of an officer who, speaking with a Polish accent, demanded that the gathered crowd disperse.

The subsequent sound of a horn, with which by the rules of Martial Status they announced to the crowd that the army is about to open fire, forced the crowd to run in all directions. I took to my heels and lay prone in the first gateway. When no shots followed, within several minutes I rose and headed on foot, since the trams were not plying, along Zagorodny Prospect toward the Technological Institute with the intention of eating there. There was almost no traffic on the streets. Here and there people stood in clusters and discussed the situation created by the insurrections among the troops of the Petrograd garrison.

There was electricity in the air. The complete absence of police - of "pharaohs" - who by that time were already hiding, struck me. The policeman whom I met going past the Czarskoselski Railroad Station also vanished hurriedly upon hearing threatening shouts from the crowd. Having dined in the "Technolozhka", I returned through deserted streets and dropped in on my sister Emma on Troitskaya. It was almost twilight when, around four in the afternoon, I left Emma's apartment and, heading home, I went out onto Nevsky.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw that on Nevsky, from the side of the Admiralty, trucks with red flags were moving filled with armed soldiers and workers proclaiming revolutionary slogans which met with support from the then still not numerous crowd on the street.

Everything around me showed that what yesterday still seemed so distant and incredible had finally occurred.

That the dreams and aspirations consecrated with the greatest sacrifices of a number of generations of the best sons of Russia were finally fulfilled.

That the hated autocracy, so long held up by bayonets, now, abandoned by all - even the "pharaohs", had finally collapsed.

The symbol of the old regime, the building of the Alexandro-Nevskaya Police Station, located right there on Nevsky, beyond Znamenskaya Square, was in flames, proclaiming this beyond any doubt.

Having merged with the crowd which was increasing minute by minute, I became an indivisible part of it in an attack of "mass psychosis". When we came up to Liteyny Prospect, illuminated by the conflagration of the already burning building of the Distict Court, the crowd, working with crowbars, broke into two weapon stores located on Liteyny - the Chizhov and T.V Gunsmiths.

Following the example of others, I stole a double-barrel shotgun on which hung a tag with the price - 240 rubles. Waving the shotgun, part of the crowd, with the shout: "we won't let it be put out!" I blocked the way on Nevsky to the fire brigade which headed to the burning police building.

We let the fire brigade through when we received the assurance that "we won't put out the police building fire; we'll only safeguard the surrounding houses".

In this revolution my double-barrel shotgun, still without bullets, replaced a military weapon with success, since in this decisive hour for the autocracy not a single person could be found in the capital who would come forward to its defense with a weapon in his hands.

The February Revolution was nicknamed the "great and bloodless". It deserved the title of "great", since its consequences were enormous and indelible - the February Revolution laid the beginning to events which in all respects altered conditions of life in the Russian Empire beyond recognition. It was also "bloodless", since the government, being confronted with the fact of insurrection in the capital garrison, did not make a single attempt to restore the situation. The old regime fell at the first push, like an overripe fruit falls from the tree. The old government disintegrated immediately at the very beginning of the crisis and all its members either ran, or hid themselves, or sought protection in the government Duma - the only organ of the old order which continued not only to function, but, with the strength of events, along with the legislative functions had to take over also those of the executive power, forming a committee for this purpose into the composition of which entered leaders of all the parties, headed by N. Rodzyanko, the Chairman of the Duma.

As regards events in the evening of the historic 27th of February, 1917, which I personally witnessed - having merged with a crowd and moving up along Nevsky, on Znamenskaya Square we ran into a crowd which came from the direction of Goncharnaya street.

Everyone in this crowd, consisting predominantly of teenagers, had one or two military rifles in his hands and many of them were girdled with cartridge belts with live ammunition. This weaponry was from the military arsenal located on Goncharnaya Street, which the crowd broke into, handing everyone a weapon. Weaponry thus found itself in the hands of people either not mature or not skilled enough to handle it.

In the following days this fact was the reason for many misunderstandings and for confused shooting that in its turn delayed the normalization of life in the capital for several days.

Moving on further, I came to the burning many-storied police building (the Alexandro-Nevskaya station). Here I was witness as the crowd gave vent to its feelings of accumulated hatred for the old regime.

At that time, when the upper stories stood in flames, the crowd in the lower stories were all dedicated to destruction.

Having broken in, some threw through the windows everything they found within - czarist portraits, police statements, tables, chairs, office utensils and much else, even some dummies (from the police museum, as I was explained). Those downstairs grabbed everything, tore it to pieces, broke it, stamped on it with their feet to the crowd's cries of exultation and threw it into a fire - a big bonfire built on the spot on the street.

I roamed about the streets until midnight. At first the suddenness of the change filled me with a feeling of amazement. Could it be, I asked myself, that the passionately desired, which yesterday still seemed such a distant and unrealizable dream, has become a fact?

But with each hour which, bringing no changes, still further convinced me that the fall of the old regime had really occurred, the feeling of doubt gave way to a feeling of exultation.

At last the road to freedom and prosperity was open for all the peoples populating Russia!

In the early morning of the 28th of February, David and I went out of our house. Heading along the Nevsky to Znamenskaya Square, we ran into an enormous croud, partially armed, which ran toward us in a panic. They shouted to us that "general Ivanov, at the head of a battalion of Georgian cavalry, is firing upon Znamenskaya Square from the Nikolayevsky Station" - from where in reality explosions similar to shots were heard.

David and I lingered on and then continued on our way when it became clear that this was not the firing of the troops of general Ivanov, but shells in the cellar of the burning Alexandro-Nevakaya Station building exploding from the fire.

We came to Znamenskaya Square when, from the other side, moving from the direction of the Admiralty, an enormous column of several thousand people entered the square, consisting of armed soldiers of all units and kinds of outfits of the Petrograd garrison. With this the complete absence of members of the commanding cadre struck me.

In those transitional days, fearing bloody exploits on the part of soldiers (those actually did take place in the fleet, at Cronstadt and were distinguished by extraordinary cruelty), all officers, with rare exceptions, abandoned their units.

Deprived of command, by whose orders only they were accustomed to act, for the first time left to their own devices, the soldiers looked around helplessly in search of people who would lead them. My student uniform, which indicated my affiliation with a group which had a firm reputation as revolutionaries, automatically elevated me to the rank of leader.

The following fact bears witness that, in the absence of genuine leaders, since the revolution broke out spontaneously and was not planned by anyone, not only soldiers saw a leader in each student at that time.

Upon my entrance into the square, a railroad worker came up to me with the words: "comrade student, I came to ask you to take us off work." To my remark that the work of the Nikolayevska railroad now appeared to be doubly important in connection with the provision crisis, I got the answer that they were workers of the Statistical Department, not important for the business of supply and that with such events taking place on the street, they could not work anyway.

Yielding to his appeal, I followed him to their office where, still observing work discipline, about fifty clerks sat facing their superior. I shouted "Comrades, whoever feels that he is not needed here, let him go out to the street!". The clerks were only waiting for this and as one man hurled themselves to the exit.

When I returned to Znamenskaya Square, overcrowded with thousands of armed soldiers and civilians, a shot suddenly resounding precipitated events which at the end demanded my intervention as a leader.

The resounding shot aroused a commotion and, since it was construed by the crowd as the beginning of an assault of enemies of the revolution, who finally were making themselves known, it served as the signal for the beginning of a very intense firing upon the "pharaohs".

In an instant everyone, I among them, lay prone on the snow and whoever could, fired at the imaginary enemy - a "pharaoh" firing from the roof of one of the numerous buildings surrounding the square. A soldier lay on top of me and also fired uninterruptedly, but each time at a different target. The confused, very intense firing, which held all those in the square pressed close to the ground, continued for about twenty minutes.

In the end an armored car, having arrived from somewhere, started to fire deafeningly from its machine guns and showered the roofs of all the buildings surrounding the square with bullets, among them the railroad station where the firing caused a conflagration.

The shooting ceased when, I remember, one sailor, who apparently was fed up with lying on the snow, stood up in all his gigantic height and, waving his rifle, began to invite others to follow his example.

Shaking off the snow from themselves and looking around embarassedly at their neighbors, gradually everyone rose to their feet.

My suggestion to search the houses surrounding the square was accepted without objection after I pointed out the senselessness of firing upon the roofs. They did not find any "pharaohs", but they found several generals in the Severnaya Hotel, whom they brought to me.

Fearing for their lives, I ordered them to be taken to the Tavrichesky Palace where the Government Duma met, which was fulfilled without objection.

I should say here that the soldiers of the capital garrison, predominantly muzhiks, were the true heroes of the February Revolution, for it was they who, without being led by anyone, came out against the old regime and brought about its fall; in these first days they revealed their good nature, slow to anger, and a great readiness to obey.

It should be noted that they in no way resembled those soldiers who in October, under the influence of the Bolsheviks who systematically pumped them full of hatred, breathed of malice and thirst for revenge.

Having left the square, David and I were repeatedly compelled to seek refuge in gateways along the way to our sister's, since any single shot, which was immediately ascribed by the crowd to a "pharaoh" sitting on the nearest roof, aroused intensive, indiscriminate shooting.

The confused firing, which was repeated when we came to Troitskaya Street, could have had more serious consequences, since this time the "pharaoh" allegedly sat on the roof of the house in which our sister lived and a summoned armored car took part in the ensuing battle. For reasons unknown to me and even less understandable, the armored car fired from its machine guns upon the house from bottom to top and David almost fell a victim of the hail of bullets which poured into Emma's room through the windows.

The fact that again a careful examination did not reveal a "pharaoh" in our house still further strengthened my doubts concerning the accuracy of the version of "pharaohs" firing from the roofs.

I agreed with this version only with difficulty even before, since such single shots would defy the common sense and the sense of self-preservation of the shooter - indeed, having not the slightest chance to alter the situation which had sprung up, these would be nothing other than acts of suicide.

In the course of Tuesday, the 28th of February, I stumbled repeatedly into confused firing and hunts for "pharaohs" first in one, then another part of the city. By now, I personally did not pay attention to "pharaohs" and continued calmly on my way.

The myth of "pharaohs firing from the roofs" promoted the creation of an impression upon the general public who sat locked up at home that the departing old authority was showing resistance, whereas, according to my observations, in reality there was none.

But I should proceed from events of which I personally was a witness, to a description of happenings which changed the course of the country's history. I had mentioned already that after the old government disintegrated, the executive power in the capital passed to the Governmental Duma embodied in the Council of Heads of all parties, with the exception of the party of extreme rightists.

For a full picture it should be noted that the members of the Duma, in their enormous majority, with the exception of a small faction of so-called "leftists", (the social Democrats with

Chkheidze and Tseretelli and Labor with Kerensky at the head), did not want the revolution and feared it strongly.

The members of the liberal parties - the so-called "Kadets" with Milyukov and Shingarev and "Progressivists" with Efremov and Konovalev at the helm, did not want the revolution because of a feeling of patriotism. They feared, not unfoundedly, that the revolution and the shocks inevitably connected with it would lower the fighting ability of the Russian Army in the period in which the war entered its last decisive phase.

For the members of the moderate-conservative parties (the "Octobrists" with Rodzyanko and Guchkov and the "Nationalists" with Shulgin at the head), to the feeling of patriotism was also added a reluctance to be deprived of class privileges.

The repeated and desperate attempts (still on the eve of the day when the revolting troops once and for all handed the capital into the hands of the masses) of the Duma majority, in the person of Chairman Rodzyanko, to convince the Czar to make concessions and to call to power a government of people enjoying the confidence of the country are explained by their premonition of the impending threat and the desire to avert the revolution. The blinded Czar Nicholas answered the desperate appeals of Rodzyenko with a decree for the dissolution of the Duma.

By an irony of fate the decree of the Czar came to the capital on the 27th of February, when the members of his government, fearing for their lives, one after the other (including Protopopov) sought refuge in the Duma, which it magnanimously did not refuse them. Since the revolution, as I mentioned previously, burst out spontaneously and did not have any leaders, in the first days after the overthrow, in the capital the authority of the country so to say "lay about in the street". It was assumed by the only organized group in the capital at that time - the Governmental Duma, through its Executive Committee, consisting of leaders of all the parties, under the chairmanship of Rodzyanko, Chairman of the Duma.

The fourth, so called "qualified" Duma, elected, on the basis of Stolypin's law, only by the propertied classes, did not reflect the interests and moods of the wide masses of the country.

The authority of the Duma was much strengthened, however, during the war when its members, defending the interests of the country, came out unanimously against the rule of the Empress who had fallen under the influence of Rasputin.

However, the fact that the non-propertied part of the population was not represented in the Duma, undoubtedly served as the stimulus towards the simultaneous formation, upon the example of the revolution of 1905, of a Soviet (Council) of Worker, Peasant and Soldier Deputies, headed by members of the Duma Chkheidze as Chairman and Kerensky as Vice-Chairman.

The Soviet opened its meetings in the building of the Duma - the Tavrichesky Palace, built by the Empress Catherine II for her favorite Potemkin.

The revolution broke out during the time of a great and terrible war which was to decide the fate of Russia as a great power for many decades to come. This dictated the indispensability of avoiding shocks during the transition of power - they would undoubtedly decrease the fighting ability of the country. The executive Committee of the Duma considered that dangerous upheavals would be avoided if, in the transition of power, the principle of legal succession was preserved. On the 1st of March the Duma sent its authorized agents, Guchkov and Shulgin, to the Czar, with a demand for his abdication in favor of his son Aleksey, with his brother Mikhail Aleksandrovich as a regent until the majority of the young Czar. This step had the consent of the "Soviet" which, in the period of its organization, displayed relative moderation and tractability.

The last act of the drama which put an end to the three-hundred-year reign in Russia of the Romanov dynasty, took place in the city of Pskov, where the headquarters of the army of the Northern front were located and where Czar Nicholas came after his attempt to break through to the Czarskoye Selo (where the Czarina and the children were located) was foiled when his train was stopped by railroad workers at the Dno Station.

When consulted, the commanders of all the fronts [2] unanimously saw in the abdication the only way out of the situation which had sprung up in connection with the events in the capital.

---

[2] Ruzsky of the Northern, Brusilov of the Southwestern, Nikolay Nikolayevich of the Caucasus and general Alekseyev, Chief of the General Staff.

In the city of Pskov, Czar Nicholas gave Guchkov and Shulgin a statement of abdication signed by him on the second of March, 1917, not in favor of his son, however, but in favor of his brother Mikhail.

Nicholas justified his act by a reluctance to part with his ailing son.

The Provisional Government, with the liberal prince G. E. Lvov at the head, was also formed on Thursday, the 2nd of March. Besides his chairmanship of the Provisional Government, prince Lvov took also over the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The key Ministries in the Provisional Government were taken over by:

P. N. Milyukov, leader of the Kadet party - Foreign Affairs

A. Guchkov, leader of the Octobrist party, - Military Affairs

A. F. Kerensky, leader of the Labor party - Justice

Tereshchenko, a large sugar manufacturer from Kiev - Finance.

The promulgation of an edict on the convocation of a Founding Assembly for the formulation of a new Constitution and an edict on the revocation of all the laws and resolutions of the government which contradicted the principle of equality of all citizens without distinction of religion and nationality were foremost in the announced program of activity of the Provisional Government.

The edict on the equality of all citizens, by which all legal restrictions against Jews were revoked without exception, was promulgated and signed by prince Lvov and Kerensky on the 20th of March, 1917.

I already mentioned that there were two authorities in the country: along with the Executive Committee of the Duma, a Soviet (Council) of Worker, Peasant and Soldier Deputies was organized as the representative of the non-propertied and of the workers.

As early as on the 1st of March, the "Soviet" promulgated its order No. 1, by which it established elected "Councils of Soldier Deputies" in all military units, with which henceforth the officers' commanding cadre had to share authority; the discipline and fighting efficiency of the army were thus delivered a fatal blow from which it was not fated to recover. The revolutionary feelings of the Soviet intensified even further after it rapidly overcame the difficulties of the organizational period, and its initial tractability gave place to an independent and implacable policy.

It was at the insistence of the Soviet, as voiced by its Vice-Chairman, A. F. Kerensky and contrary to the opinion of the majority of members of the Provisional Government (of Guchkov, Milyukov and others) that the Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandovich refused to take the throne on the 4th of March, 1917, in order that this question should be decided by the Founding Assembly.

One should not close one's eyes to the fact that, by rejecting Monarchy, (albeit limited) as a form of government for the country - Monarchy, which had a three-hundred-year tradition and deep roots in the country, the Soviet pushed Russia onto a path subject to mighty quakes which should have been avoided in view of the war which demanded great sacrifices and efforts.

Another such act fraught with consequences was the promise to the units of the Petrograd garrison, given at that time by the government on the initiative of the Soviet, that the units would be kept in the capital and not sent to the front; this converted the capital garrison into a praetorian guard which would decide the fate of the country for many decades, as we will see later that October.

However, before moving to a description of interrelations between the Provisional Government and the Soviet in the period right after the fall of the old regime and describing the main dramatis personae (as I saw them, observing from close at hand), I wish to devote several lines to my personal experiences in that period.

For me personally the first days after the fall of the Czarist regime were a period of great emotional uplift and unclouded shining hopes.

It was for me a time which inspired love, all-forgiveness and great deeds, a time which engendered heroes.

The consciousness that I had re-acquired a mother-country which I could love with the love of a son and serve faithfully - a normal feeling for everyone, but which the Czarist government corroded for me as a Jew by systematic persecutions and humiliations - filled me with joy.

In addition, the long awaited "freedom", of which generations had dreamed and in the name of which the Zhelyabovs and Kalyayevs went fearlessly to their deaths, had in truth arrived.

I remember the day of the 5th of March, 1917 - the first Sunday after the overthrow and a week of disorderly firing which kept the majority of residents inside - when the Nevski Prospect was bathed in sunshine and overflowing with a holiday crowd.

I recall the joyful, shining faces of the well-dressed crowd strolling along Nevsky, on which were seen many expensive furs and fur hats (which had disappeared in the time of transition) and also a giant soldier who stood on the corner of Nevsky and Liteyny and called in a loud voice:

"Czar Nicholas abdicated in favor of Mikhail and Mikhail abdicated in favor of the people - make a donation for the soldiers' victualizing station".

The fact was that many military units, having learned of the overthrow, had rushed to Petrograd from adjoining districts and had to be fed. The enthusiasm of these first days inspired the propertied classes too. Right after the overthrow the newspapers announced that the rich engineer Denisov, donated one million rubles for the use of the Provisional Government. The enormous success of the monetary "Loan of People's Freedom" issued by the Provisional Government further confirmed it.

Life in the capital quickly settled down. However, on the streets the great quantity of idle people in soldiers' uniforms was striking.

In the middle of March David and I went to Gomel to our parents for the Passover holidays and David remained there with them.

Having returned to the capital, I continued to work at my old post at the Obukhovsky factory.

Of my firm faith at that time that with the fall of autocracy in Russia would come the dawn of a new and better life speak two facts which I now recall:

When I saw that some pimp was beating a prostitute on Nevsky, I interfered with a shout full of indignation: "How dare you beat a woman!" for which I almost paid with my life.

In view of the shortage of bread, bread ration cards were introduced in Pertrograd. These bread cards were initially issued at the place of work and at our construction I was in charge of this, actually without being suprvised.

In those hungry days I lay sick at home when my second cousin Moysey Alperovich, who shared my quarters, ran in with the news that they were issuing on the cards coarse bread made of siftings; he began to entreat me to give him some of the great number of factory bread cards kept by me - I refused him with indignation. Some time later he confessed that he had systematically stolen bread cards from me without my knowledge.

However, on the political, originally cloudless horizon of the country heavy clouds began to appear as a consequence of the virtual dual authority reigning in the country.

The Provisional Government, newly formed by the Governmental Duma, was faced with enormous problems. It consisted, with the exception of its Minister of Justice, Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky (called the "captive of democracy"), of members of moderate parties who, because of the war, did not want and feared the revolution.

For the administration of the enormous country it was necessary to create a new governmental apparatus to replace the old one - and do so quickly, since the broad masses refused to wait. It had to draw up and promulgate a number of new laws which guaranteed everyone civil liberties and equality before the law and bring improvements of a social character for the workers, such as the eight-hour working day. However, the main and most difficult problem for the government in this time of war and deep political upheaval was how to preserve the fighting capacity of the army in which discipline was already shaken by the irresponsible orders of the "Soviet"; it also had to inspire the people to new sacrifices which they, wearied by the three-year war which had exhausted their will for victory, by all indications no longer wished to make.

The problems of the Provisional Government were further complicated by the fact that the prerogatives of its power, legislative as well as executive, were founded on a revolution which the majority of its members had not wanted - they were to come forth and act as the government of a revolution which an ideologue of the first government, P. N. Milyukov, considered a product of German hands (the Archive of the Russian Revolution, volume 1, page 23).

This "Original Sin" was the main source of the weakness of the Provisional Government in its relations with the Executive Committee of the Soviet, for whose members the revolution was the long-awaited fulfillment of their aspirations; this weakness predetermined the outcome of all the contentions between these dual powers in the country.

However, before moving to a description of divergences of an ideological character (and, under conditions of a World War and a revolution, there were also questions of tactics) dividing the moderate parties which composed an overwhelming majority in the first make-up of the Provisional Government from the parties of the so-called "revolutionary democracy" represented in the "Soviet", it is necessary to say some words about their leaders - Milyukov and Kerensky and the world view of the groups they represented.

Pavel Nikolayevich Milyukov, a scholar, a historian, and a person of great intellect, was a statesman in the English tradition. As an orator he did not set a crowd on fire, for in his speeches he did not appeal to the feelings, but to the logic and the sober conclusions of his listeners. In its program the party of "people's freedom", (the Cadets), of which Milyukov was the leader, set as its aim the attainment by legal means of a parliamentary system after the English model, along with civil liberties.

Milyukov and those who thought as he did realized that the war, which was then in full swing, was the decisive phase in the struggle of Slavdom with the Germans who, in spite of Gruenwald, in the course of the following 500 years were persistent and successful in their "Drang nach Osten" (Drive to the East).

Milyukov and those like-minded were afraid that defeat would deliver a fatal blow to Russia's great-power status and that, having been thrown back to the borders of Muscovite Russ, Russia would become a German satellite for many years to come. The conditions of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, which did not go into effect only because, with the help of the United States, the Germans were defeated in the West, later confirmed the justice of his apprehensions.

Fearing that political upheavals, inevitable in the shift of power, would weaken the fighting capacity of the country and bring the Germans victory, the moderate-liberal parties preferred to remain with the Romanovs, however bad they were, rather than to venture on a forcible overthrow, the consequences of which it was hard to foresee.

The events which followed the February revolution would fully confirm the validity of these fears.

The revolution brought the country not only military defeat but also Bolshevism - and with it the indescribablr horrors of civil war, collectivization, "Yezhovshchina" (purges), the cataclysm of the Second World War and the chains of unheard-of coercion, from which Russia has not been able to free herself to this very day. (This was written in 1977)

The assertion that it was Lenin who engendered Hitler would not seem an exageration if it is taken into consideration that it was not only a wave of German nationalism which raised Hitler to power. The help rendered to Hitler by the German high bourgoisie - the Thyssens, Krupps and even Jewish bankers who, in the conditions of the world economic crisis, of millions of unemployed and an enormous Communist Party in Germany, saw in Hitler in the first place a dam against Bolshevism - played a decisive role in his success, as is well known.

Certainly Laval and Petain in France, the Duke of Windsor and the circle of Lady Astor in England, and Joseph Kennedy in the United States were guided not by a desire to help Germany to restore its political position in Europe, but by a desire to create a bulwark against the red danger.

Thus they allowed Hitler to free himself from the bonds of Versailles, to create an enormous army and to arm, enabling him to begin an uninterrupted procession from one triumph to another and, having become the idol of the German masses, to attempt the conquest of the world.

Of the other influential members of the moderate-liberal majority in the Provisional Government the following should be mentioned: the leader of the Octobrist Party - Alexander Guchkov, of the Cadets - [3] (the latter two brilliant orators) and of the large industrialists - [4]. All these were people who had either attained successes working in industry or distinguished themselves by their successful and selfless work in the institutions of the "Zemstvo" - of rural self-government (introduced under Czar Alexander II where electoral rights rested on a property qualification), which maintained hospitals and schools, looked after the improvement of systems of agriculture, maintained roads and administered justice by means of the district courts and the rural police courts.

But if an explanation and even justification can be found for the attitude of the moderate-liberal parties toward the revolution, which based itself on a sober analysis of the dangers secreted in it, then this sober analysis of a situation is hard to find in the foreign policy of their leader Milyukov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first months of the revolution, when the decline of discipline and of the fighting capacity of the army, which he so feared, was already evident.

The fact that demoralization (exclusive of whatever reason and by whose ever fault) had also spread from the capital to the army at the front, where mass desertion and fraternization with the enemy had begun, dictated the necessity of seeking the speediest end to the war in order to avoid catastrophe.

Ignoring this truth and paying no attention to the protests of Kerensky - the representative of the "revolutionary democracy" in the Provisional Government - Milyukov, at the end of April, 1917, made a statement in the name of "new" Russia on the subject of her foreign policy which would only prolong the war.

The statement of Milyukov that the new government planned to conduct the war "to a victorious end" and to fulfill the agreements concluded by the Czarist Government with the Allies, which foresaw large territorial annexations at the expense of the vanquished (among them Russian sway over the exit from the Black Sea would be ensured), provoked demonstrations of the military units of the Petrograd garrison, with protests and a demand for the resignation of Milyukov.

These events provoked the first crisis in the cabinet of Prince Lvov and ended with the departure of the Minster of Foreign Affairs Milyukov, who was replaced by Tereshchenko, and of the Minister of Military Affairs Guchkov, replaced by Kerensky.

In addition, representatives of the "Soviet" entered the composition of the Provisional Government, headed by the "Danton of the Russian revolution", the Social-Democrat Herakly Tseretelli, an outstanding orator, whose speeches we listened to with delight. The statement made by Russia after the resignation of Milyukov (on which Kerensky had already insisted earlier), that they were agreeable to a peace "without annexations and indemnities", by which there would be neither victors nor vanquished, one should admit, was a step in the right direction in connection with the necessity to end the war as soon as possible.

By this statement the "new" Russia addressed itself to the German people - skirting their government - with an appeal to cease the bloody and senseless carnage, since nothing was threatening them in this approach to peace..

The conditions of the peace proposed by Russia gave also the German government an opportunity to avoid the defeat which, after the entry of the United States into the war on the side of the Western Powers was, upon sober analysis, admittedly more than probable.

However, as we know from history, the peoples as well as their governments did not always act in line with their best interests. Neither the German people nor their government responded to the proposal of Russia - the proferred hand of Russia was left to hang in the air.

Instead of agreeing to a general peace without victors, the German government, not wishing to renounce their predatory plans, sought to conclude a separate peace with Russia, having preliminarily weakened its fighting capacity and demoralized its army, with the aim of smashing the common front of the Allies.

---

[3] Prince Lvov, Shingarev, Nekrasov, Rodichev and Maklakov.

[4] Konovalov and Tarashchenko

Germany did not err in their calculations, though only temporarily.
In their merciless war Vladimir Ilich Lenin (Ulyanov), a Russian revolutionary, a fanatic and uncompromising enemy of capitalism living in exile in Switzerland, whom Germany transported through their territory in April of 1917, in a sealed railroad car together with his followers, turned out to be a more effective weapon in their struggle against Russia than were the poisonous gases used by them on the Western front.

Before moving to a characterization of Lenin and to a description of his role in the subsequent events, I wish to say several words about a central figure of the first period of the revolution - Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky - and to dwell on the factors which brought about the sad fact that the revolution, met with such shining expectations, instead of a better life, brought the people of Russia unprecedented deprivations and sufferings which continue to this very day, and to the Jewish people - a cataclysm before which pale the catastrophes under the Crusades and Bogdan Chmelnitsky, the Cossack hetman whose cruel slaughter of 100,000 Jews destroyed about 300 Jewish communities in the Ukraine in 1648-49.[5]

The February revolution served as a prologue to the tragic events which, with the introduction of socialism in the countries with the greatest concentration of European Jews, led to a destruction of Jewry's financial basis, and with the horrors of civil war, Stalinism and Hitlerism led also to its almost complete physical annihilation.

Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky was a brilliant representative of that part of the Russian intelligentsia inspired by the best ideals and deeply devoted to the principles of freedom and democracy; he dedicated himself to helping the oppressed and unfortunate, and was ready for sacrifices in the service of his people.

Kerensky, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party illegal under the Czars, had already as a young lawyer come forth as defender in political trials and in 1912 was elected a member of the Governamental Duma, where he joined the Labor Party.

It was Alexander Kerensky - the "defender of the weak and oppressed", who did not remain indifferent to the sufferings of the Jews who, undeservedly accused of treason, were evicted from the front line areas in May of 1915. In June of that same year Kerensky went to Kovenskaya Province (to the small town of Kuzhi) in order to refute from the rostrum of the Governmental Duma the false accusations against the Jews on the basis of facts ascertained by him personally on the scene.

As leader of the Labor Party and Vice-Chairman of the Soviet, which he entered as a Socialist, Kerensky assumed the portfolio of Miniser of Justice in the formation of the Provisional Government; with the reorganization of the government after the resignations of Milyukov and Guchkov he assumed the most responsible post of War Minister.

Kerensky was a gifted and talented person, even though uneven, an orator not lacking in theatricality and poses, able to set a crowd afire with his speeches. I had the opportunity to hear him repeatedly - at the Obukhovsky Factory in the "Big Turreted Workshop", also several times at the then popular so-called "concerts-meetings" together with the French Minister Alber, Tomas Masaryk - the future first president of independent Czechoslovakia and the Belgian Socialist Vandervelde.

Kerensky was then at the zenith of his popularity. I was witness when his portrait was sold at auction for a thousand rubles.

Although Kerensky, in his work on the restoration of the fighting ability of the army had the full support of the "Soviet", which then, having rejected the conflicting proposal of Lenin, shared his conviction on the necessity of defending the native land, he was nevertheless faced with an enormous problem.

Although the meetings in the military units, including those on the front line, organized with the help of the political comissars attached to the military command, one and all passed resolutions expressing full confidence in the Provisional Government, the fundamental problems facing the Russian revolution were far from resolved by this.

These basic problems of the revolution did not tarry to reveal themselves in all their breadth: at the time of a total war which demanded a maximum of striving, there was an abyss, created by the force of historic events, between the Russian intelligentsia, to whom the revolution had entrusted the executive power and as such bore responsibility for the fate of the country, and the populace, who after the revolution became the rulers of their destinies - with all the tragic consequences ensuing from this fact.

---

[5] Written in 1977.

Two men played a decisive role in the cultural development of Russia.
The first was Genghis Khan, whose Tartar yoke retarded the cultural development of the Muscovite Russ for 300 years.
The other was Czar Peter the Great who joined the Baltic to Russia and transferred the capital of the country to St. Petersburg, the city founded by him. He thus "chopped through a window to Europe" and made Russia a member of the family of European nations. Trying to make up for the lost time with an iron hand, Peter swept aside everything and everyone who stood in the way (he even executed his own son Aleksey for opposing his plans), and forcibly joined the upper classes of the population to the European culture.
The gigantic work accomplished by Peter the Great would not, as a result, bring seas of human blood and suffering and, to the contrary, would have been salutary for the country if the successors of Peter on the Czarist throne had continued and extended the work begun by him and had not held the people for a whole 150 years in slavery and for almost 200 years in ignorance.
In the second half of the last century the Russian Czars found moral support for their harmful deeds from the Slavophiles - ideologues of an absolute autocracy who regarded the Czar as the "anointed of the Lord". The Slavophiles, [6] believed that the problem of the backwardness of the Russian masses should not be addressed by measures which would enlighten them and raise their cultural level, but rather by continuing to hold them in ignorance, cultivating in them obedience to the "Czar Little Father" the Autocrat - thus by word and deed they supported the reactionary policies of the Pobedonostsevs.
As a result, when the Autocracy, befouled and corroded by Rasputinism, collapsed under the burden of a disastrous war, power found itself in the hands of an intelligentsia set apart culturally from the backward masses and unwilling to acknowledge the unpraperedness of the multitude for the role of free citizens.

The Russian intelligentsia, among whom were many aristocrats, joined to the Western culture by the iron hand of Peter the Great, marched in step with its Western fellows, absorbing into itself the ideas of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Hegel and Marx. The majority of them were "repentant gentry", a vivid example of whom was Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy; they looked at the Russian muzhik, the sufferer ("Show me a habitation where the Russian muzhik does not suffer", says the Russian poet Nekrasov) with infatuated eyes and idealized him to a high degree. The tendency to see the "God-bearing masses" as endowed with the highest human qualities was intensified by the distinctive Russian atitude towards suffering.
Whereas in ancient Greece, according to the dictum of the "Stoics" "happiness lies in ourselves" they taught how to overcome suffering from within by a philosophical attitude towards it and in modern Western Europe they struggle against suffering, obliterating its reasons and sources, in Russia a so-called cult of suffering existed. They looked at suffering as at something precious, since they thought suffering cleansed and ennobled human nature and thus they often sought suffering, reveled in suffering and worshipped suffering.
"I bow down not before you, but before your sufferings" says Raskolnikov to the prostitute Sonka Marmeladova, kissing her foot in Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment".
In this Russian mentality lies, in my opinion, the main reason why the "Revolutionary Democracy", inspired by the best ideals, saw in the "enveloped by a halo of suffering" Russian masses yesterday's slaves who, having passed through the all-cleansing and ennobling crucible of suffering, were mature for the role of citizens, despite their ignorance and backwardness.
Thus the "revolutionary democrats" made irreparable mistakes, such as the liquidation of monarchy (this time limited) and the Order No. 1, promulgated by the "Soviet", which destroyed the discipline and the fighting capacity of the army. Having made the not mature enough for inde-

---

[6] the Aksakovs, the Kirievskys, Samarin, Komyakov

pendence masses the rulers of their own destinies, they made the masses easy prey of visionary fanatics as well as of conscienceless demagogues seeking a chance "to catch fish in troubled waters".

To justify measures which led to the collapse of discipline in the army, H. Tseretelli, one of the leaders of the "revolutionary democracy", said in one of his speeches, I remember: "If the Russian people who had defended their native land under constraint, refuse to do this as free citizens, then truly one would have to give up hope for them". To admit that the Russian people were not ready for self-government meant admitting that the Russian intelligentsia had prayed to a false God for decades, meant admitting to one's own bankruptcy.

In connection with the immaturity of the Russian masses for the fulfillment of the role falling to their share, I recall a couple of telling facts.

From the first days of the revolution, spontaneous discussions took place on Znamenskaya Square which frequently dragged on until dawn.

I remember how one soldier, in a chat with me, explained to me why he was not satisfied with the freedom attained: "What kind of freedom is this when, if I give you a slap in the face, a policeman called by you will take me to the police station?"

The second chat on that same Znamenskaya Square of which I want to tell was on the theme of lynchings, which in those days became a frequent phenomenon - when private people, in the majority of cases idly roaming soldiers, administered justice and inflicted punishment on supposed wrong-doers on the spot. Even without addressing the severity of the punishments, when wrong-doers paid with their lives for relatively minor transgressions (thus I heard about a case when a crowd hurled into a canal a small trader who demanded too high a price for bread), as should be expected, some judicial errors took place.

This was in the period of the revolution when everybody was eager to show "full confidence in the Provisional Government". At least the resolutions flowing into the capital, passed at meetings of committees of military units, self-governing institutions and all other kinds of organisations were attesting to this confidence.

In a conversation with soldiers who were justifying the lynchings, I asked them: "Do you truly have confidence in the Provisional Government, comrades?" and, having received an affirmative response in a chorus, I continued: "Comrades, what kind of confidence is this - by administering justice and inflicting punishment on the spot, one is taking away from the government the opportunity of investigating the matter and of punishing the guilty? By this you clearly express your nonconfidence in the Provisional Government". My co-conversationalist got out of a difficult spot by asserting: "You stand up for such swindlers - might you yourself be one?" After such an assertion I did not persist any further and hurried to vanish into thin air.

A. Kerensky embarked upon the restoration of the fighting capacity of the army. He hoped to attain this without restoring the compulsion i.e. the soldier's obligation to unquestioningly carry out the orders of the command or face field court martials for disobedience. Kerensky tried to use persuasion, (for which he was called the "Chief Persuader") and appeals for the voluntary fulfillment of duty as free citizens; having run into the catastrophe of the so-called "attack of the 18th of June" undertaken by him, Kerensky was forced to exclaim in a moment of despair: "I do not know who I am looking at, free citizens or rebellious slaves!"

The attack undertaken on the 18th of June 1917, by well-armed and well-equipped Russian troops, (after Kerensky had personally toured the forward position in preparation, appealing to the soldiers to fulfill their duty to their newly free native land) ended in bad defeat; it had exposed to the country the complete demoralization of the Russian army. The fact that the troops, retreating hurriedly and in great disorder, nevertheless found time to perpetrate a big pogrom in the Galician city of Kalushch, robbing and destroying the property of peaceful residents, made an especially terrible impression on the country, I remember.

During the First World War one interesting and important fact was demonstrated to the world, one in which can be found in great measure the explanation for historical phenomena puzzling at first glance, such as the formation and existence of enormous empires where a few, belonging to culturally higher standing peoples, held millions of "barbarians" in full submission and obedience.

The curious fact, as it was reported at that time, was that the colonial troops fighting on the Western front, standing on the lowest level of cultural development, along with great physical endurance and personal bravery, were significantly inferior to their less physically hardy Western European comrades when a prolonged effort of will was demanded - they broke down sooner under the psychologically almost unbearable burden of the prolonged hurricane fire of the German heavy artillery.

Looking back, one should note that in the struggle for a dominating position in Europe during the First World War, the Russian people, the majority of whom stood on a lower cultural level, displayed much less tenacity and will for victory, after an initial patriotic outburst, than the Western peoples, especially the Germans and the English.

In the summer of 1917, according to my observations, the common people's will for victory and wish to struggle for the preservation by Russia of her great power status in Europe had vanished completely.

The tragedy of Russia's position was aggravated further by the fact that the so-called "Revolutionary Democracy" (which was in power then, with A. Kerensky at the head), refused to admit these facts which, because of the activity of the Bolsheviks (of whom there will be more later), took on a more ominous character with each day, and to make the neccessary conclusions.

Only the institution of a military dictatorship could have saved Russia in the summer of 1917, (if it was at all still possible to save them from defeat and its tragic consequences) since it was not out of the question that such a dictatorship, having a central governmental apparatus at its disposal, could manage to restore discipline in the army by severe measures and cope with the masses, already numerous and deeply demoralized, but along with that uncoordinated and disorganized.

But, blindly faithful to the principle - "society may perish, but justice must be done" - and setting the preservation of a democratic form of government higher than the averting of the inevitably approaching catastrophe of defeat, the so-called revolutionary democracy, jointly with the Bolsheviks, suppressed the "Kornilov insurrection" in September of 1917 - the attempt of general Kornilov to occupy the capital with the help of troops loyal to him, to remove the Provisional Government, declare himself dictator and attempt by severe measures to avert the final disintegration of the army.

In the subsequent interval prior to October, the revolutionary democracy, following that same principle, allowed the Bolsheviks - the fatal enemies of democratic forms of government which guarantee personal rights to everyone - to exploit widely the democratic principles in order to annihilate democracy in Russia forever.

Finding themselves in power, in the conditions of total, mortal war with Germany, Kerensky and his followers refused to draw the necessary conclusions from the fact that there was a chasm, (created by Genghis Khan and Peter the Great), between the Russian people and its intelligentsia. The fact that they would not sacrifice the democratic principles - even temporarily in the name of their salvation, were connspicuous among the reasons which brought the "February Revolution" to its tragic end.

Another element of the drama converting the "February Revolution", which we met with such enthusiasm and optimistic expectations, into a prologue to tragedy - events which shook the whole world, brought the peoples of Russia indescribable sacrifices and sufferings and the Jewish people an almost complete annihilation - was the fact that the backwardness of the broad Russian masses, determined by history, made them an easy prey of conscienceless demagogues who in their drive to seize power did not stop at any means.

BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

Deadly role of the Bolsheviks
Ludendorf crafty injection of Lenin to liquidate the second front
Lenin's perfidious demagoguery
I heard Lenin's speech
Bolshevik's horrible deeds in contrast to their promises
Troops of the Petrograd garrison organized by Trotsky
End of my deferment, I want to defend democratic Russia
Father engineers deferment
Work at the Mamontov's
October Bolshevik revolution
Kerensky gets little help from military
Bolshevik's supposed "pacifism"
Hunger in Petrograd in the months after the Bolshevik overthrow
Dictatorship- Lenin takes off mask
Forcible disbanding of the Constituent Assembly
Shameful Brest-Litovsk peace conditions
Victory of the Allies saved the communist state
Vlasov's treason of 1941 equivalent to Lenin's treason of 1917
Evaluation of capitalist and communist economies
The indispensable free market price
Terrible price in human suffering of the failure of communist economy
Soviet mockery of truth
Lenin the greatest evil genius of this century
Events in the country after the forcible disbanding of the Assembly
Trotsky organizes the Red Army
David's and my life in Petrograd
Terrible hunger
My exams at the university
Leaving Petrograd for Gomel
Peaceful life in the Ukraine under German occupation
German defeat, capitulation
Terrible pogroms after German withdrawal

I will proceed now to a description of the deadly role played by the Russian Social-democratic Party (the Bolsheviks), headed by Lenin and Trotsky, in the dramatic events of the summer and fall of 1917.

In his drive to disable Russia as an adversary and liquidate the second front in the east, the Chief of the German General Staff, General Ludendorf did not err in his choice of instruments which would carry out his plans when, in March of 1917, he transported Lenin and his followers from Switzerland to Russia through Germany in sealed cars.

Vladimir Ilich Lenin (Ulyanov) belonged to those people who, at the vital points of history are able to radically change its course. A fanatic blindly convinced of the infallibility of Marxist doctrine as a panacea for all human ills, Lenin, in his drive to bring about the social revolution of the world, carried the motto that "the end justifies the means" to an extreme. Lenin scorned no means, however much they contradicted the elementary laws of Judeo-Christian ethics, if only they could serve his purposes.

Arriving in Russia in March of 1917, with her backward, primitive population which had not yet partaken of the civil liberties expressed in the maxims of the great French Revolution, Lenin did not hesitate to declare the latter "outdated illusions".

When Lenin was reproached for being supplied with money by the German enemy through their agent in Copenhagen, the former Russian revolutionary Parvus, he declared with boundless cynicism: "money has no smell".

I had the opportunity to hear Lenin in May of 1917, when he, in his two-hour speech at the big turreted workshop of the Obukhovsky factory, attempted to convince the workers that the Russian people were foolishly "fighting for the capitalists", and called for the overthrow of the Provisional Government, " the lakeys of the capitalists" and for the establishing of a socialist regime.
Not being an orator capable of setting the masses on fire and, in addition, having an unattractive appearance - bald, short, with a small paunch and unkind eyes, Lenin did not evoke a response in the workers and had to cut short his speech when his endless repetitions bored the workers, who began to protest "enough about capitalists!"
The following address of the old revolutionary, Lev Deytch, had greater success, when he, commenting upon the war, appealed to the workers for patience and moderation - "not to fly, as Lenin wanted them to, with a speed of 120 versts an hour". Subsequently the wife of the famous Social Democrat Pavel Axelrod and a representative of the Black Sea fleet by the name of Feldmen came forth, with speeches in the same spirit.

However, the speeches of Lenin and his adherents had significantly more success among the troops of the Petrograd garrison and the soldiers at the front than with the Petrograd workers.
The call of the Bolsheviks to the ignorant soldier mass to abandon arms and to overthrow the Provisional Government which was demanding the greatest sacrifices from them, evoked a much more vigorous response, for understandable reasons.
But Lenin and his adherents did not limit themselves to the destruction of the fighting strength of the Russian army and the deliberate delivery of the homeland into the hands of the enemy, in whom they knew vanquished Russia would find no mercy.
They strove for and came to power by way of the kindling of class hatreds, playing on the anarchistic and base instincts of the ignorant masses.
Through perfidious and unconscionable demagoguery, such as the proclamation of slogans contradicting the Marxist doctrine when they, pretending to be devoted friends of the peasants, whose sole concern was the satisfaction of their land hunger, by the slogan: "plunder what had been gotten by plunder", incited the peasants not to wait for the land reform of the Constituent Assembly but instead to set about immediately upon a disorderly division of the landowner's lands - in which not only were the landowner residences burned, but also all the cattle perished and agricultural equipment was destroyed.
As we know from what is now already history, these "devoted friends of the peasants", when sitting firmly in the saddle, with the dispossession of the "kulaks" (well-off peasants) and the merciless collectivization, deprived the peasants not only of the land grabbed in 1917, but also of that received by them long ago as their alottment during the emancipation from serfdom.
The Bolsheviks came to power with slogans "Down with war" or "War to the palaces and peace to the huts", pretending that they were sincere pacifists, opponents of wars - "the monstrous progeny of capitalism", supposedly aching for every drop of spilled blood.

Today, in the light of just the fact that in 1939 it was the Bolshevik "Politburo" which, by the so-called Ribbentropp-Molotov pact had consciously ignited the fire of the Second World War with its oceans of blood and tears, these slogans sound like cruel mockery.
The Bolsheviks awoke the beast in the ignorant muzhik (peasant), as did long ago Razin and Pugachev, with a thirst for vengeance and retribution against not only the possessing classes, but also the intelligentsia (not excluding its liberals) resulting, in the beastly murder of its leaders - Singarev and Kokoshkin, men who had devoted their whole lives to the service of their people.
The defeat of the general attack undertaken by the Russian command on the 18th of June, 1917, in spite of the superiority of the Russian troops in technical means, the shameful pogrom in the

city of Kalushch and also the unsuccessful, bloody insurrection undertaken on the 3rd of July, 1917 by certain units of the Petrograd garrison who attempted to overthrow the Provisional Government were mainly the result of Bolshevik doings.

Working on that day in the factory located ouside the city, I personally was not a witness to the July 3rd events. As it was told in the city, certain units of the Petrograd garrison, with the first machine gun regiment at the head, advanced against the Provisional Government with weapons in their hands after an inflammatory speech of Leon Trotsky in the Narodny Dom (People's House). Their bloody encounter with troops loyal to the government, consisting predominantly of Cossacks, took place on the Liteyney Prospect and ended with the defeat of the insurgents, with significant losses in killed and wounded on both sides.

Having suffered this reverse, Lenin decided to run away and hide in Finland; Trotsky had the courage to remain in Petrograd and was temporarily imprisoned by order of the Provisional Government.

After the July 3rd defeat, at the convocation in Moscow of the All-Russian Governmental Conference, the Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, was met with great enthusiasm. At that time the activity of the Bolsheviks subsided temporarily, in order to spring up with still greater force after the suppression of the "Kornilov Insurrection".

Various rumors plied in Petrograd regarding the role of Kerensky in the insurrection of General Kornilov and the reasons for the suicide in his study of General Krymov, commander of the troops advancing on Petrograd.

It is hard for me to say how much truth there was in the rumors that Kornilov undertook the insurrection with the knowledge and consent of Kerensky, who at the last minute played him false. Having lived through these events I can only say that Kerensky, apparently wishing to justify his line of conduct, in his memoirs tries to minimize the degree of disintegration in the army then and, by this, the degree of urgency of the need for the introduction of a military dictatorship.

As I had already mentioned, after the suppression of the Kornilov venture, the Bolshevik's resumed their activity with redoubled force.

Speaking of that period the major outstanding role which Leon Trotsky played in the events leading to the October revolution should be mentioned. In my eyes - unacquainted as I was with the behind-the-scene side of Bolshevik work, in Lenin's absence from the capital the personality of Trotsky, who then displayed great activity, invariably as an initiator and leader, dominated over Lenin at that time.

Trotsky was a revolutionary from way back, as long ago as the revolution of 1905. At that time a member of the Social Democratic Party (the Mensheviks), Trotsky was the Vice-Chairman of the Soviet of Worker's Deputies in Petrograd (the Chairman was Khrustalev-Nosar). The fall of the Monarchy found him in the United States and, arriving in Russia, he joined the bolsheviks.

A person of unusual abilities - a brilliant orator, and an excellent organizer, with an iron will and steadfast energy, as an implementor Trotsky was an excellent supplement to Lenin, a person of ideas, but predominantly a theorist.

The pendulum of the revolution, which after the July 3rd events shifted to the right, turned abruptly to the left after the failure of General Kornilov in September.

The subsequent shift to the left of the masses was reflected immediately in the composition of the Petrograd "Soviet" where, instead of the former majority of parties of a moderate direction - the "Mensheviks" and that of the "right SRs" (Social Revolutionaries), a new majority was formed of Bolsheviks and the parties close to them - the "left SRs" and the Mensheviks-Internationalists.

The activity of the "Soviets" new majority, who had elected Leon Trotsky as its chairman, was directed, on the one hand toward paralyzing the Provisional Government and depriving it of the opportunity for self-defense, on the other toward the preparation of seizure of power.

Pursuing the above mentioned goals, the "Soviet" successfully opposed the carrying out of the Provisional Government's orders - with fatal consequences for the latter - concerning the dispatch to the front from the capital of units of the Petrograd garrison and the departure to the sea

of vessels of the Baltic Fleet from Kronstadt (an island fortress in the Gulf of Finland, defending the approaches to the capital).
Simultaneously, the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the troops of the Petrograd garrison was organized with Leon Trotsky at the head "for the defense of the achieved revolution".
Thus organized, the troops of the capital and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet with the sailor Dybenko at the head, nicknamed "the ornament and pride of the Russian revolution", were, as we will see, fated to determine Russia's destiny for many decades to come.

Before moving to a description of the October Revolution and its character, however, I wish to devote a number of lines to our family chronicle. I continued to work at my old job at the Obukhovsky factory in the summer of 1917.
On the 26th of July, 1917, my deferment from military service elapsed.
As a citizen with full rights, this time I firmly resolved to fulfill my duty to the homeland and remained deaf to the letters and telegrams of my father who demanded my coming to the city of Gomel in connection with my forthcoming induction into the army.
The reeducation of my father (in whom, for long decades - from the very day of his birth, the Czarist government had poisoned, by ceaseless persecutions, slanders and humiliations any feeling of duty towards his native land) into a citizen ready to sacrifice his son - his favorite (as they asserted in the family), for the homeland, apparently would demand a much longer period of time, if it was possible at all.
On July 25th, the eve of the day of my appearance before the Military Supervisor, I wrote my parents that since I was firmly resolved to fulfill my duty to my country and wanted to avoid heartbreaking minutes of parting, I therefore considered my coming to Gomel inadvisable.
When I opened my eyes on the morning of July 26th, the day I was due to appear at the precinct, I saw my father at the head of my bed; having a foreboding that I was contemplating something unacceptable to his loving father's heart, he rushed to Petrograd at the last moment.
To his assertion that I had heart disease I answered that there was a medical examination at the Military Precinct. I could not help but agree with him, however, that setting off to war, it was my duty to say goodbye to the family and, most importantly, to my mother.
I went to Gomel, having received from my father a promise, that he would not take any steps to free me from military obligation. As far as I know my father kept his word, but the Military office continued my deferment for illness - "an insufficiency of heart activity" - for another year.
The exceptionally hard conditions of my work at the Obukhovsky factory, which were aggravated by the severity of the winter, apparently had affected my health. Already in April (when the incident with the provision cards, described by me previously took place), I had to spend about a week in bed due to heart weakness.
My sister Emma gave birth to a son in Gomel, in August of 1917 - the first grandson in our family who, in accordance with the grandfather's request, was named and entered in the register of births by the Jewish name Gershon.

In the beginning of August, when I returned to Petrograd, I immediately was given a job at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Mitnin Quay "Oil Center", headed by engineer Palchinsky who enjoyed a deserved reputation as a brilliant organizer and administrator.
The ruble was already strongly devalued by then and my salary as a "recorder", (the first official grade) amounted to 250 rubles a month. The "Oil Center" was in charge of all the railroad tank cars, taking care of the distribution

of oil products, then mainly kerosene used for lighting purposes. To appreciate the importance of this product for the country, one should take into consideration the fact that at that time there were electrical stations only in the big cities and that not only the towns, villages and borroughs, but also the smaller cities were illuminated exclusively by kerosene.

Oil was then obtained in Russia on the Caucasus only - in Baku, Grozny and Maykop. Oil was transported in the summer months by the Caspian Sea and up the Volga in barges which were unloaded in the harbors of [7] where oil reservoirs were located.

Each such harbor supplied a determined, close lying part of the country according to a monthly plan established by the "Oil Center". The plan was forwarded for implementation to the so-called "Oil Committees" instituted in every harbor and to the pertinent Management of the railroad.

The "Oil Center" composed the monthly plan, approving the deals which the oil trade companies[8] concluded with merchants throughout the country with the estimation that oil was to be distributed uniformly - each city had an established distribution quota.

I remember that I took a most active part in the September transportation plan. I worked in the Ministry for a short time only - I left it in the middle of September since I received work under better conditions in a large private enterprise - that of the A. and N. Mamontov brothers in Moscow. The Mamontovs owned in Moscow on the Presna the largest paint and varnish factory in Russia. Along with some others [9] the Mamontovs belonged to the so-called "eminent Moscow merchants", the richest industrialists in Russia, proprietors of multi-million fortunes.

These families were known all over Russia because of their role not only in the economic, but in the political life of the country (such as their financial support of the revolutionary emigrees abroad) and also as patrons of the arts. The Mamontovs belonged to the latter - Fedor Shalyapin began his career in the "Mamontov Theater" in Moscow.

The Mamontovs hosted people in the arts for months in Abramtsev, a village belonging to them - among them also a Jewish native of Wilno, Mark Antokolsky, the most outstanding Russian sculptor of the last century.

The Mamontovs' factories worked for defense; the receipt of foreign raw materials and currency for a fixed price was connected with bureaucratic red tape in the Ministries,[10] which were located in Petrograd. My duty was to expedite all these transactions of the Mamontovs in the Petrograd institutions.

In addition to a better salary - 400 rubles a year, the Mamontovs guaranteed me work with them for no less than a year. I went to Moscow immediately, where the legal adviser of the firm, the barrister Isayev, handed over a whole number of matters to me. Returning to Petrograd, I began to work energetically. At the same time, since I decided that my relatively high salary would be sufficient for two, I wrote my brother David in Gomel that he should come immediately to Petrograd for the continuation of the study of medicine begun by him a year earlier. David was staying in Gomel since father, whose funds were already running out, was in no position to maintain him in Petrograd.

However, my endeavors in governmental institutions on the affairs of the Mamontovs did not continue for long.

---

7 Tsaritsyn, Saratov, Samara, Nizhni Novgorod and Rybinsk,

8 (Nobel, Mazut, Volzhsko-Chernomorskoye and others)

9 Morozovs, Konovalovs, Ryabushinskis, Tretyakovs and Vtorovyms, to enumerate only the most well known

10(the Financial-Account Office, the Main Management of Foreign Supply of the Fleet and Army (Glavzagran),) They ceased since in connection with the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks all the officials of the central governmental institutions, without exception, refused categorically to cooperate with the new authority and abandoned their work, declaring a strike which entered into history under the name "sabotage".

On the morning of October 24th, several hours before the start of developements leading to the fall of the Provisional Government, I was present on Dvortsovaya square, on which the Winter Palace also towered, as Alexander Kerensky, then still premier and Commander-in-Chief, conducted before his departrure to the front a review of the Woman's Death Battalion, which marched before Kerensky with its commander, Bochkareva, at the head.

Within several hours the Woman's Battalion, together with the Cadets of the Petrograd Military Academies, were fated to have been the only defenders of the Provisional Government when the military units of the Petrograd Garrison and the Kronstadt sailors began the siege of the Winter Palace at the order of the Military-Revolutionary Committee.

Upon the insistence of Lenin, who was hiding in Finland, the Bolsheviks had begun, under the leadership of Trotsky, to prepare from the beginning of October for a seizure of power

Having a seizure of power in mind, the Bolsheviks (who in January of 1918 were to disband by force the nationally elected Constituent Assembly), with the conscienceless demagoguery peculiar to them, refused to take part in the Democratic Conference (Preparliament) convened by the Government - under the pretense that it was convened with an aim to sabotage the elections to the Constituent Assembly.

Simultaneously with the siege of the Winter Palace in which the Provisional Government had been meeting, Bolshevik troops and sailors, according to a plan worked out beforehand by the Revolutionary Committee, began the seizure of important strategic points in the city, such as the Peter-Paul fortress dominating over the city, the bridges, railroad stations and also important institutions such as the Central Telephone Station, the Governmental Bank, printing presses and others. The siege of the Winter Palace did not continue long. Cut off from the outside world, the Provisional Government capitulated after the Palace was fired upon by the guns of the cruiser Aurora which, having sailed from Kronstadt, closely approached the palace from the Neva.

Kerensky managed to leave the Winter Palace and the capital in time to turn to the troops at the front, hoping with their help to restore the situation in the capital.

The result of this struggle for power was predetermined by the following facts: Kerensky, in part by mistake, in part by the strength of circumstances, was compelled to count on and then to seek support from the higher military officers who were hostile to him since they could not forgive him his behavior during the Kornilov insurrection.

These officers hoped mistakenly that, having rid themselves of the Provisional Government with the help of the Bolsheviks, they would easily be able to cope with the latter; this played a sizable part in influencing the conduct of the higher military personnel in these critical days.

The commander of the troops of the Petrograd District, Colonel Polkovnikov, whose duty it was to forestall the insurrection, intentionally lulled the vigilance of the Provisional Government, sytematically deluding it with false reports on the moods prevailing among the troops of the Petrograd garrison and on the number of trustworthy military units.

The behavior of general Chermisov, Commander-in-Chief of the North- Western front, to whom Kerensky, fleeing from Petrograd, personally turned for help, as well as that of general Krasnov who led the troops advancing on Petrograd with the aim of restoring the Provisional Government to power, was more than equivocal.

On the other hand the Provisional Government had in the Bolsheviks a purposeful foe for whom there was nothing sacred, who did not stop at anything.

The fact that the revolution, achieved by them with the aim of instituting socialism in the country, did not bear a "proletarian" character, for the Petrograd worker took no part in it, did not disturb the Bolsheviks. The fact that it was not Karl Marx but Emelyan Pugachev who expressed the genuine mood of the muzhiks in uniform, i.e. of those who were carrying out the revolution, puzzled the Bolsheviks not at all.

Speaking of the moods reigning then among the troops, I recall a scene, or rather the speech at which I was present, of a man in a soldier's greatcoat who, soon after the overthrow, clamberd up on the monument of Alexander III in Znamenskaya Square, which served as the people's rostrum in those days.

"Comrades," he thundered, "when they confiscated the peasant's last horse, they called it "right and correct".

" When," he continued, "the peasant's only son hung on German barbed wire fortifications, they said that was in order. But now, when the moneybag's pockets are being seized, they cry anarchy, anarchy!!"

With an angry gleam in his eyes and threateningly waving his fists, he vowed retribution to the former governing classes. And one had to admit that the Russian muzhik had something to be requited for.

I left, I remember, with a sad feeling that the Nemesis of history spoke through the lips of this muzhik and that the hour of reckoning for the propertied classes was approaching.

The Bolsheviks made no attempt to restrain the crowd's thirst for revenge - this led to vengeful actions which could not now set right the irredeemable.

To the contrary, in contradiction to Marxist dogma, the Bolsheviks kindled the anarchistic, anti-social and rapacious instincts of the masses to make of them obedient tools in the seizure of power.

In October Lenin and Trotsky did not lead the crowd as leaders who point out the way, indeed they trailed after the crowd.

The unbridled demands of the ignorant crowd were being converted into the Bolshevik's Bible in October and were proclaimed as their slogans, however much they contradicted the Bolshevik's intentions. The same Bolsheviks who would set fire to the Second World War twenty years later, in October of 1917, pandering to the unwillingness of the muzhiks in soldier's uniforms to defend their homeland from a deadly enemy, played at being convinced pacifists and demanded an immediate peace at any price.

It was they, who preached the unlimited dictatorship of the proletariat and who would, after coming to power, create the "Threefold Special Departments" and the "Gulag Archipelago" with their unspeakable nightmares, who in October played at being champions of the inviolability of personal and civil liberties.

They were the same Bolsheviks who would soon force collectivization, who, playing to the rapacious and anarchistic instincts of the masses, demanded the immediate chaotic division of the landowners' lands.

But for all this it should be said that, undoubtedly, the decisive factor which sealed the fate of the Provisional Government was its determination to continue a war which demanded the greatest sacrifices from the people, especially from those who, instigated by the Bolsheviks, were not willing to make any more sacrifices.

In these October days the question of who would rule the country was decided for the whole population of Russia by the troops of the Petrograd garrison, which a week before had refused to set out for the front after being ordered by the government to do so.

As it turned out, for many decades to come, they handed over unlimited power to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, headed by Lenin, which was meeting in the building of the Smolny Institute for Well-born Girls. As the results of the general elections to the Constituent Assembly, conducted in November of 1917 showed, the Bolsheviks represented a minority of only 25% of the country's voting population.

For the time being nothing threatened the power of the Bolsheviks. The counter-attack of the Cossacks under the command of general Krasnov, organized by Kerensky, after an initial success at the Gatchina, ended with the Cossacks going over to the side of the Bolsheviks and the flight of Kerensky. The attempt of cadets of the Vladimirskoye Military Academy to take possession of the building of the Central Telephone Station also ended in failure.

In Petrograd it was recounted from the words of eyewitnesses that the Bolsheviks threw the unfortunate cadets off the roof of the Telephone Station into the Moyka river.

At first the overthrow did not bring any noticeable changes. Life flowed on by inertia - stores, restaurants, cafes and theatres were open; the post office and telephones functioned.

Even though the all-Russian Congress of Railroad workers (Vikzhel) was demanding a government of all the socialist parties, this did not impinge on the railroad passenger traffic, as I had personally the opportunity to ascertain.

In Moscow the Bolsheviks met with a more stubborn resistance on the part of government troops ensconced in the Kremlin under the command of colonel Ryabtsov. The battles in Moscow continued for about a week.

Arriving to Moscow from Petrograd on business for the Mamontov's on the 1st of November, I found the city not at all recovered from the battles which took place the day before. The empty streets, on which lay the torn down electrical lines of the immobilized trams, bore traces of stubborn battles. The burned down houses at the Myasnitskiye Gates were still smoking; on Bovarskaya Street, where I stayed, many houses took hits when the Bolsheviks fired cannons from Kudrinskaya Square upon the Alexandrovsky Military Academy located on the Arbat at the start of Povarskaya.

Although I continued to receive a salary because of the guarantee received by me from the Mamontovs, in fact my work for them in the central governmental institutions of the capital ceased on account of the strike of the officials.

However, being in Moscow, I received a private assignement from the Mamontov directors to send from Petrograd a large quantity of "Ultramarines" bought by them personally at the factory. Because of the acute shortages reigning then in freight cars and locomotives, this was a difficult task and in the event of its completion I stood to earn a lot.

In the course of the winter months I managed to fulfill the assignement and to earn about 20,000 rubles, which gave David and me the possibility to carry on despite the terribly high cost of living caused by the shortage of products and the devaluation of the money which the Bolsheviks printed without any control.

Of the first money earned thus, I remember, I sent my father 2,000 rubles which proved useful to him.

But let us return to events and to the life in the country.

As I had mentioned previously, the transition of the summit of executive power into the hands of the Bolsheviks, who because of the refusal of the old government officials to cooperate with them did not have an apparatus capable of governing the country, did not affect substantially the internal life of the country, except that the food conditions in the capital worsened sharply with each passing day. This was especially critical in the matter of bread - it almost completely disappeared from the free market and the price of a pound of bread equaled the price of a pound of butter (in peaceful times butter was twenty times more expensive than bread).

In the most fashionable restaurants, such as Cuba, Donon, Medved and others, they began to serve sandwiches not on bread but on potatoes.

The bread rations, which were distributed by the city on ration cards, decreased daily and in the spring came down to fifty grams (an eighth of a pound) a day of bread in which flour was mixed with potato peels and grass.

"Meshochniki" (people selling food out of bags they carried) became the main suppliers in those days. Packing railroad cars to their limits and blocking railroad passenger traffic throughout the country, tens of thousands of "meshochniki" began to journey to the countryside for foodsuffs which they brought to the capital.

The question of where to obtain the foodstuffs to feed a family became the main daily worry of housewives and the prevalent theme of conversations.

In connection with this psychosis I recall a song of Sergey Sokolsky who then appeared at 100 Nevsky at the Lin Theater - "are they doling out or not?" and the funny stories about the events of the day told by the storyteller Maradudina in the Pavilion de Paris about how the eaters found themselves in Petrograd, while provisions remained abroad (in the Ukraine, then under German occupation).

I will have to return later to the theme of ever more acute starvation under the shadow of which passed this period of my stay in Petrograd.

As regards the prevailing attitude of the man in the street toward the new regime (at least in the center of the city which, as the results of the elections to the Constituent Assembly showed, coincided with the attitude toward the new regime of the vast majority of the country's population), it was then definitely negative.

I was repeatedly a witness on Znamenskaya Square when speeches of the partisans of the new regime were met with energetic protests by the crowd, which often turned to hostile demonstrations.

Patrols of armed sailors, then the main support of the new regime, would save the situation and disperse the crowd by rapping with the butts of their rifles.

Another characteristic feature of sentiments of the populace at that time was that only rarely did anyone believe in the longevity of the new regime, almost everyone predicted its rapid fall.

I remember that the higher ranks of military personnel underestimated the durability of the new authority most egregiously.

As I frequently would hear from the mouth of some intrepid general: "Give me a hundred good Cossacks and I will scatter this scum in one hour!"

We all underestimated then the pliability, as well as the lack of principles of the new authority; their ability, by hiding their true goals and postponing their enactment into practice, to make use of the resentments and moods of the masses for their plans and their readiness to pay any price for the preservation of power - as showed the peace of Brest-Litovsk.

We did not realize then that by the slogans "Grab and divide the landowners estates!" and "Enough of fighting, fellows!" they not only obtained power, they also cemented it in peasant Russia.

There can be no doubt that the result of the Civil War, which blazed up right after the revolution, would have been entirely different had it occurred after or even during the realization of their Marxist program - the "dispossession of the kulaks" and the "collectivization" connected with it.

Soon after the revolution the so-called "drunken weeks" began in Petrograd, when crowds of soldiers burst into the wine cellars of the palaces and vodka distilleries and drank themselves into deadly stupor.

In order to prevent the drunken orgies from taking on even larger dimensions, the new authorities gave the order to destroy all the stocks of alcoholic beverages in the capital. In the capital they told of occasions when people drowned in the cellars during the destruction of alcoholic stores. One such disaster, with numerous human victims, was said to have occurred when the spirit reservoirs at the Smirnov distillery on Ivanovskaya street were smashed.

Simultaneously, armed robberies became more frequent and with the approach of twilight movement in the streets became more risky. These armed attacks for the purpose of robbery became paricularly frequent on gambling houses which had vastly multiplied in the capital under the official guise of cultural clubs. I was a frequent visitor of such a club at 126 Nevsky Prospect in connection with my friendship with one of my fellow-students at the University, Lazar Davidovich, a rabid card player, the son of doctor Zakharin, the owner of the house in Gomel in which my parents lived.

I personally did not play cards and went there only in order to dine. Having repeatedly been subjected to robberies, this club formed its own defense force consisting of ten rifle-armed soldiers.

Lazar Davidovich, despite occasional streaks of luck when he would win large banks (in the many thousands) playing "baccarat", was a victim of his passion. We said of him that he was a "sick man" and left the club daily only at six in the morning when they were already closing it.

He not only had lost the 20,000 rubles sent to him by his father for the purchase of "Freedom Loans", he also systematically lost to the last copeck the money which his father sent him monthly, as well as the salary he received as an employee of the Trade-Industrial Bank.

In the first part of November 1917, several representatives of the left socialist revolutionaries entered into the government still headed by Lenin and the portfolio of the Minister of Justice was given to a certain Steinberg, with whom I personally got closer acquainted much later in New York.

Leon Trotsky, one of the most popular leaders of the October revolution along with Lenin, received the portfolio of People's Comissar for Foreign Affairs.

Stalin, then a personality unknown to the general public, became Comissar on matters of Nationalities.

Of the members of the new government I wish also to mention here Lunacharsky, the People's Comissar of Public Education. Lunacharsky, a typical Russian idealistic intellectual, believed in Marxist socialism as the New Evangel which would usher in the best era for humanity, but was also a connoisseur and great lover of the arts.

In contrast to Lenin, a cold fanatic for whom there was nothing sacred or invaluable on the road toward the realization of the Marxist doctrine, Lunacharsky was a person with feelings.

When the news reached Petrograd that, during the takeover of power in Moscow, the church of Vassily the Blessed was damaged by the besieging Bolsheviks during the battles in the Kremlin, Lunacharsky, horrified that precious ancient monuments of Russian art were perishing, sent in his provisional resignation.

Upon receipt of these news his first reaction was that one could not pay a price that high for the triumph of socialism. However, at the insistence of Lenin, Lunacharsky withdrew his resignation.

At a meeting at which Lunacharsky appeared, he appealed to us listeners not to overlook the beautiful face of the October revolution because of "petty excrescences".

By one of the first decrees of the new regime, all private banks were nationalized and the contents of the bank safes of private persons were declared confiscated as long as they represented jewelry and valuable papers - shares, bonds and the like.
Government comissars were appointed to all the private banks and all the owners of bank safes had to present themselves with keyes for an examination of the contents in the presence of the comissar and the removal of valuables which according to the decree were to be confiscated - the safes of those who did not present themselves at the appointed time were broken into.
As I mentioned previously, the former tutor of my brother David, Samuel Isidorovich Minsker, was appointed by the new authority as a comissar of the Petrograd Private Commercial Bank.

I will go over here to a desctiption of events which covered the "Worker-Peasant-Government" with indelible disgrace and immersed Russia into gloomy darkness which did not lighten up to this time (written in 1977).
Prior to the coup the Bolsheviks did not cease to reiterate at every crossing that they were the sole devoted fighters for the speediest convocation of the Constituent Assembly - the communicator of the free will of the people and the genuine master of the country.
As previously mentioned, still in October, on the eve of the revolution, Leon Trotsky refused to take part in the pre-Parliament as a representative of the Bolsheviks under the pretext that it was created with the aim of delaying elections to the Constituent Assembly.
But the impending first baptism of fire of the Bolshevik slogans exposed all the perfidy and falsehood of their propaganda.
Their attitude towards the Constituent Assembly changed radically when the free all-Russian elections conducted in the course of November, 1917, indicated that the Bolsheviks would compose a pitiful minority in the Assembly, since only 25% of the population voted for them.
Socialist-Revolutionaries of all shades gathered an absolute majority of votes - 58% and the Cadets - 13%.
Mass arrests and the closing of opposition newspapers carried out by the new authority preceeded the opening of the Constituent Assembly.

On the day of the opening, an enormous, peaceful crowd of several tens of thousands of workers and intellectuals, with slogans of "All power to the Constituent Assembly" heading for the Tavrichesky Palace where the Assembly met, encountered lethal volleys (like it did under the Czar on January 9th, 1905); there were several dozens of innocent people killed and a great number of wounded.
The Constituent Assembly itself was forcefully dispersed by sailors headed by Dybenko; it could convene for twenty hours only, in the course of which it only managed to elect the Socialist-Revolutionary Victor Chernov as its chairman.
These criminal deeds of the Bolsheviks aroused universal indignation in the whole civilized world, even of socialists of the most radical trend, including Rosa Luxenburg, who then was serving a term in a German prison.
The writer Maxim Gorki, who had joined the Bolsheviks, also pilloried the Bolshevik murderers in his newspaper "New Life".

The forcible dispersal of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks was the turning point in the history of Russia.
The people populating it ceased to be the masters of their country and not their welfare but the triumph of the socialist doctrine was declared as the final goal of the government's policy by the usurpers of authority.
Lenin and his companions-in-arms took off their masks. The Social-Democratic party, the Bolsheviks, was declared the sole master of the country. The Central Committee (TseKa) of the

party, buttressed by bands of lawless soldiers and sailors, began, with the help of the newly instituted, seated in Petrograd at 1 Gorokhovaya street, "Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle Against Counter-revolution, Sabotage and Speculation" (the Che-ka), headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky, to unite in its hands the legislative as well as the executive power and to govern the country without restraint or accountability.

With the forcible dispersal of the Constituent Assembly an epoch began in Russia when a handful of fanatics reduced the people into a means for the attainment of their goals, when the lives, happiness and prosperity of millions were mercilessly sacrificed for the realization of a socialist doctrine in a country least of all prepared for this. Even according to Marxist studies the prerequisites needed for a socialist revolution were completely absent in peasant and little industrialized Russia.

With the accession to power by the Bolsheviks, the enterprise of demoralization of the army and its transformation into a crowd holding endless meetings and discussions continued with unabated force.

When the Chief of the General Staff, General Dukhonin, refused to execute Lenin's order commanding the Russian troops to begin "fraternization" with hostile forces, he was replaced by Ensign Krylenko at General Headquarters in Mogilev, whereupon general Dukhonin was brutally killed by the soldiers and sailors accompanying Krylenko.

The subsequent proposal of the Bolsheviks to declare an armistice and to begin negotiations for the conclusion of a separate peace between Russia and Germany was accepted by the latter.

After neither the German government nor the German people had accepted the proferred hand of the Provisional Government in May, 1917, which proposed a peace without victors or vanquished, Lenin had to be aware that by proposing the same conditions of peace (without annexations and reparations) to the Germans, while simultaneously reducing the fighting capacity of the Russian army to zero, he was handing over his defenceless native country to the predatory German imperialists for devouring.

Bringing the Russian Army to complete disintegration, Lenin could not help but know that by his criminal deeds he brought upon his mother-land the disgraceful conditions of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, by which Russia, losing the Baltic , part of Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the Donbass was thrust back to the boundaries of Muscovite Rus and was converted into an economically and politically dependent satellite of Germany.

The present day official version of the Soviets, averring that the brilliant foreign policy of Lenin returned to Russia its great power position amounts to continual mockery of the truth, since actually it brought Russia to the disgrace of Brest Litovsk treaty.

The victory of the Allies on the Western front was made more difficult by "the brilliant policy of Lenin" which permitted the Germans to transfer all their troops from the Eastern to the Western fronts. The restoration of Russia's great power status was undoubtedly due to this Allied Victory.

If it were not for the victory of the Allies on the Western front, achieved through greatest sacrifices, Russia would still groan today under the Prussian boot, and, in addition, there would doubtlessly have also been fatal consequences to the experiment undertaken by Lenin.

As is well known, after the end of the Second World War the Soviet Government dealt cruelly with the so called "Vlasovtsy" for their betrayal of the Motherland.

It knew no mercy for treason to the native country in which Stalin reigned, where everything holy was reviled and only baseness and betrayal triumphed; where Pavlik Morozov, having denounced his own parents, was declared a model of youthful virtue and an example worthy of imitation.

This same Soviet Government, however, cannot find sufficient words of praise for Lenin who, as we saw, also betrayed his native country when first he disarmed it and then delivered it, defenseless, for devouring to its centuries-long mortal enemy.

It should also be noted here that Lenin betrayed not the Motherland where the hellish conditions created by Stalin reigned, but the native land which had become a "Mother" to all the nationalities populating it, the native land which was inspired by a desire to bring happiness, freedom and justice to all its citizens .

But here the reader of these lines has a right to think that perhaps we will find justification for the criminal deeds of Lenin and his followers in the goals which they pursued and in their attainments.

In order to appraise the actions of Lenin and his adherents from the point of view of their historical perspective, it is neccessary to answer a question of a principled character - do ends exist which justify any kind of means, however loathsome they may be? If the answer is affirmative, does the triumph of the Marxist doctrine, the introduction of socialism into a Russia backward in all respects, a country where the prerequisites for the implementation of this economic system were lacking, constitute such an end?

I personally do not agree with the prevailing opinion that no goal can justify evil means. In my opinion such goals do exist and an objective criterion for their qualification amounts to the degree the given goal serves the interests of humanity and promotes progress.

The atomic bomb dropped by the United States of America over Hiroshima, entailing the death of 100,000 among the civilian population, finds justification in the fact that it put an end to the plans of enslavement of other nationalities by militarist Japan and saved the lives of a million young Americans and perhaps also of two million Japanese.

Evaluating the deeds of the Bolsheviks proposing to introduce socialism into the world after the fall of the monarchy, even in light of the thesis that goals justifying any means do exist (and for the time being not addressing the question of whether a socialist economy amounts to such a goal), in my opinion the court of history should accuse Lenin and his companions of a twofold crime, one against their native country the other against humanity.

In his analysis of the statics and dynamics of the capitalist economic system Karl Marx, in whose studies socialism found its first scientific formulation, of whom Lenin and his companions-in-arms considered themselves the faithful students and blind followers, teaches that the tendency toward the so-called "concentration of capital" taking place in the development of capitalism produces an almost painless transition from capitalism to socialism.

The cyclical development of capitalism, moving from an ascent and prosperity to a crisis and depression, in Marx's opinion led to the disappearance of small enterprises and the proletarization of their possessors during crises, and resulted in an expansion of the large enterprises remaining in the market. In connection with this process - the so-called concentration of capital - Marx foresaw that in highly industrialized countries the moment would come when the attempt of the numerically overpowering proletariat at expropriation and nationalization would meet barely any resistance from capital, concentrated in a few hands.

To begin a socialist experiment in a peasant country with only rudimentary industry, where small proprietors composed the overpowering majority whose resistance inevitably would have to be overcome, meant dooming the country to great suffering and torrents of blood and tears; dooming it to all the horrors of civil war, food requisitioning by armies, the dispossession of kulaks, collectivization - upheavals from which Russia has still not recovered today (written in 1977). The Bolsheviks contended that, even though Russia was not yet ripe for socialism in 1917, it was needed as a focus on which they, using the population as brushwood, would pile a bonfire whose sparks would kindle the conflagration of a world socialist revolution. This amounted - one must assert - to a diabolical crime for which it is hard to find requital, all the more so since, as we saw, by facilitating the victory of Germany, the Bolsheviks would simultaneously have assured the annihilation of the revolutionary focus.

The destruction of the fighting capacity of the Russian Army, which Lenin and his companions-at-arms were contriving from the very beginning, was, as mentioned above, a crime not only in respect to their native country but also in respect to the idea of a world socialist revolution - for there can be no doubt that a victorious Imperial Germany would not have tolerated the existence of a revolutionary focus on its borders, a defenseless one at that.

The monstrous conditions of peace which the Bolsheviks were compelled to sign at Brest-Litovsk strongly increased the military might of Germany and their chances of victory. With Brest-Litovsk Germany achieved finally a war on one front - at what, according to the plan of general Schliefen, they had aimed from the very beginning.

Brest-Litovsk also provided the Germans with Ukrainian grain, which they desperately needed because of the successful Alied blockade, as well as the high-quality Krivorozhsky iron ore.

The military position of the Allies was still desperate in the summer of 1918 and the Germans, having made three deep breakthroughs, were within a hairbreadth of victory. A change on the front to the benefit of the Allies ensued in August after massed tanks were introduced for the first time by the Allies at the battle of Amiens; the Germans did not fully appreciate the battle qualities of the tanks in the First World War; they only did so later and, as we know, widely used them during the Second World War.

Now let us look at the question of how history should treat the Bolsheviks and consider whether, by their actions, even though contrary to our ethical values and, as we saw, inexpedient, they nevertheless led to the realization of a doctrine of socialism which as a progressive system of the future was both inevitable and desirable.

We will try to answer the question whether the Bolsheviks inaugurated by a forcibly conjured, premature and extraordinarily painful birth of socialism a new era of a better and more enlightened life for humanity, whether the great Russian poet Alexander Blok was right when he wrote in his poem "The Twelve" that at the head of the Red Guards went "Jesus Christ in a white garland of roses".

As is well known, in this theory of "historical materialism" Marx foresaw that the transition from capitalist to socialist forms of production would change not only the economy but also the psychology of people - their morals, propensities, mentality and so forth, would transform them into morally more advanced people.

According to this theory the socialization of the means of production would put an end not only to the exploitation of man by man but also would resolve the majority of problems which torment humanity today, such as national chauvinisms, wars and the like.

It should be noted here that in the nineteenth and even in the middle of the twentieth century, the Marxist socialist doctrine was still widely regarded as a panacea for all human misfortunes.

In all industrialized countries, without exception, a multitude of people of good will and idealistic sentiments saw in the realization of a socialist doctrine a means which would resolve the problems of a deprived majority in capitalist countries.

To be sure, in distinction from the Bolsheviks who realized socialism by way of a revolution, of great upheavals and moreover in a country which had not matured for it, with all the tragic consequences flowing from this fact, European socialists, in their majority, would aspire to a painless transition to socialism by an evolutionary route when, as Marx foresaw it, capitalism itself would create the prerequisites needed for this transition.

However, humanity was not fated to find a road to recovery from the majority of its ailments in the teachings of Marx.

History was not to find alleviating circumstances for the crimes of Lenin and his followers in the fact that through the sufferings of the fathers a better and happier life was created for the sons and daughters.

The barbed wire wall erected by the Bolsheviks in Berlin in 1961 "by its silence cries" and shows irrefutably that Marx turned out to be a false teacher and a false prophet, that by comparison with capitalism, socialism appears not as a progressive but a regressive system of production, that the so-called "historical materialism" remains only in the sphere of wishes.

It should be noted that it is not only a wall in Berlin that proclaims to us that socialism in no respect justified the hopes entrusted to it.

This is also confirmed by the results of the sixty-year-old socialist economy in the U.S.S.R. as well as the economies in other countries, both in those in which a majority hoped to find in socialism a solution for their difficult and urgent problems and in those on whom socialism was imposed.

However, prior to moving on to an analysis of the socialist system of production and its results and to a short account of the teachings of Karl Marx, I wish to answer a question which suggests itself: by what is the exceptional popularity of socialism explained and where do the reasons lie for the fact that even today the false prophet Marx has more followers than Christ.

There is no doubt that the main reason for this phenomenon lies in the fact that the so-called "Laisser Faire" capitalism of the nineteenth century, during the process of industrialization of

Western Europe, (where the concept of socialism was born), created completely unacceptable conditions of life for the working masses.

I have already mentioned earlier that a capitalist economy does not develop systematically and evenly and in its development passes cyclical business conditions. It goes from an ascent to a bloom which is replaced by a crisis and a depression.

In the nineteenth and even in the beginning of the twentieth century, the government granted free play to the forces of the market mechanism. In the economic life of the country the prices of goods, labor and money obeyed the law of supply and demand under a hammer of competition; the government limited itself to the role of a passive observer. It did not attempt, as it does now, to counteract the development of cycles and to alleviate their actions by its monetary and financial policy; the business phases, left to themselves were distinguished then by their depth as well as their prolongation.

This is a period in the history of capitalism which is deservedly called "predatory", because the employer, then ignorant and greedy, refused to understand that:

1. as a matter of pure self-interest, not of kindness, he had to see to it that the worker should not disappear from the market as a consumer during unemployment, illness and old age - this itself would deepen the depression;
2. it lay in the industrialist's personal interests to see to it that unemployment should not give birth to unemployment in a vicious cycle;
3. that only when the worker was earning enough to buy his product would the owner be able to sell what he produced and by this make a profit;
4. that social insurance against unemployment, illness and old age was a neccessary factor stabilizing the economy in cyclically developing capitalism.

This was the epoch in which each man was left on his own and in his difficult moments he could rely only upon himself.

In the eighties of the last century Bismarck in Germany had introduced different kinds of social insurance, including a medical one, but not one for unemployment. The rest of the capitalist world of the nineteenth century knew no laws protecting the economically weak such as social security, minimum wage, laws providing safe and hygienic conditions of work and the like.

This was also the century in which workers did not recognize sufficiently that their strength lay in their unity and in the collisions between a "predatory" capitalism and unorganized labor the latter would almost never emerge as the winner.

As a result the wages of the worker were very low for long hours of back-breaking toil, often in inhuman conditions, into which his wife as well as adolescent children were frequently drawn.

The low purchasing capacity of the working majority of the population led in turn to frequent crises of overproduction and the throwing of workers out into the street. The unenviable position of the worker in the capitalist industrialized countries was not limited to his long and poorly paid labor in bad conditions and the fact that when he grew old he was treated as a worn-out piece of machinery. The tragedy of his situation was further aggravated by the fact that he lived eternally under a "sword of Damocles" - the fear that tomorrow he would lose his job and would walk barefoot, not because there was not enough footwear on the market, but because there was too much of it on the market; he would have no roof over his head not because there were not enough dwellings, but because some were untenanted; he and his family would suffer from cold not because there was not enough coal, but because there was too much of it.

This was a time when a German worker was happy when his daughter married a government clerk, because the post of his son-in-law was for life.

Abundance and the newly invented machines which increased the worker's productivity were a curse for him for they, paradoxically, brought him unemployment and destitution.

The destruction of a newly invented loom by weavers in Gerhart Hauptmann's play "The Weavers" appears an act symbolic of that capitalist epoch.

In these conditions it is not surprising that, when Karl Marx came forth with a bill of indictment against the capitalist system and predicted its inevitable demise in his "Communist Manifesto", he evoked a most fervid response from the proletarians of the whole world.

Having pointed out the main reason for the popularity of socialism, I wish to note that in the idustrialized countries which had preserved capitalism as their system of production, great changes have occurred during the last 100 years which have altered beyond recognition the lamentable situation of the worker which prevailed in the last century.

A number of factors of a political as well as an economic character contributed to it. The workers realized that their relative strength lay in their unity and began to organize into professional unions. They managed thus to improve their working conditions in all respects and to raise their standard of living in accordance with the growth of their productivity.

On the other hand the owners' recognition that their own success depended on a sufficient purchasing ability of the workers began to sink in more and more.

As a result of the ever progressive democratization of the forms of government, all questions - and among them those which had serious economic consequences, were no longer decided by a minority of possessors but by the people as a whole. The government now no longer restricted itself to the role of only a passive observer in the economic life of the nation; by monetary-political measures and its budget policy it endeavored to exert influence upon the economic conditions of the country.

By its tax policy, such as the progressive income tax and inheritance taxes, the government began to alleviate social inequalities in the distribution of the national income. A broad social legislation exists now in all the industrialized capitalist countries.

By now the capitalist world realized that the society's care of the poor, sick and old is not only a humane question, but that with appropriate legislation a great economic stability is thus achieved and the detrimental oscillations of capitalist business conditions are alleviated.

As before, one of the main problems of capitalism remains its development in cycles which are reflected in disturbances of the equilibrium between supply and demand for goods and labor.

Up to this time the capitalist world has not managed to eliminate cycles. It has managed only to alleviate them and to make them less painful, having decreased the amplitude of their oscillations.

In order to achieve this the capitalist world needed a radical improvement in its economic thinking. Besides the government taking on a more active role in the economic life of the country it was also neccessary to sacrifice old fetishes, such as a balanced government budget and the stability of the purchasing power of money. It was neccessary to make the paramount goal the best and fullest use of the productive capacity of industry and manpower. Without addressing the autonomous problem of the just distribution of the national product, logic dictated that in order to have more to distribute and to raise the standard of living of the inhabitants, first of all it was neccessary to produce more.

Since in the capitalist system with its market mechanism an increase in production is possible only in the presence of increased demand, the government created this demand artificially by its budget policy and monetary-political measures when they were demanded by oscillations in business conditions.

As a result of the factors described above, conditions of work in respect to duration, safety, security and the like changed for the better beyond recognition for workers of the countries preserving the capitalist economic system and the population's standard of living attained an unprecedented height despite indescribable devastations during two world wars.

I would like to emphasize here that the above mentioned achievements were also facilitated in no small measure by an extraordinary growth of the productivity of human labor due to progress in technology based on new, exceptionally important discoveries.

I would also like to emphasize here that the capitalist system of production, turned out to be unsurpassed by any other economic system in respect to the rational use of the entire means of production as well as the use of the newest achievements in the field of technology.

The picture presented by me would be incomplete and one-sided if I did not mention that the achievements in the capitalist countries were accompanied by a permanent loss in the purchasing power of money in the course of the last thirty years (in the United States it amounts approximately to 2/3). A goal not achieved up to this time is a stable price index which would demonstrate that the capitalist world had learned how to develop while preserving an equilibrium between supply and demand of objects of consumption.

On the other hand, the history of recent times discredited once and for all the myth, zealously maintained by socialist propaganda, that capitalist countries engender war in search of markets for their goods and weaponry, without the production of which they could not exist.

The unprecedented growth of industry in Germany and Japan, ravaged by the last war, proves in an irrefutable way that capitalist countries can develop excellently without producing weaponry.

As is well known, production of most types of weaponry was completely forbidden to both these defeated countries. They were allowed to produce weaponry only in quantities needed for the maintenance of security and order within the country.

In regards to markets for goods, as the history of the last decades has shown, the industrialized, capitalist countries sought to acquire such not by devastating wars but by endeavors to develop productive forces in poor countries and to raise the purchasing capacity of their inhabitants.

Thus the capitalist United States, with its enormous productive potential, sought to resolve its problems in connection with the halting of the production of weaponry at the end of World War II, not by way of conquests (which it, having a monopoly on the atomic bomb, could easily do), but by way of restoration through the so-called Marshall Plan of the production and purchasing capacity of the inhabitants of ruined Western Europe.

I dwelt in some depth on the achievements and failures of capitalism during the last century in order, on this background, to try to evaluate properly the Marxist analysis of the capitalist economy and of the tendencies predominating in it as well as the Marxist prognosis concerning its future.

The unsubstantiated assertion of Marx that of all means of production, only the worker's labor is productive, is Marxism's reference point in an analysis of capitalist statics.

According to Marx's theory of "exploitation", it is the worker who by his labor creates what Marx calls a "surplus value", which the employer, possessor of the means of production, confiscates, leaving to the worker a small part sufficient to renew his strength for work.

In his theory of "class antagonism" Marx asserts that the interests of capital and labor are irreconcilable in the capitalist system, for keeping the worker destitute will always be in the capitalist's interest, since it makes him easier to exploit.

Referring to the so-called "iron law of wages", refuted by life, Marx predicts that a hopeless and in addition ever increasing impoverishment awaits the worker in the capitalist system of production.

Marx saw salvation for the working class only in a transition from capitalism to socialism, i.e. from private ownership of the means of production to their socialization.

The transition, which Marx considered inevitable, having done away with exploitation of man by man, would bring not only social justice and an improvement in the material situation of the working class, but also, according to the Marxist dialectic, would bring a new, better life in which there would be no place for national dissension and hatred and also no casus belli (cause for war).

Such, briefly, are the main theses of Marxism.

Moving to an evaluation of the Marxist theses, the following should be noted regarding the thesis asserting that out of all means of production only the labor of the worker is productive and creates the so-called "surplus value": Marx himself had difficulties with coordinating the fact of the existence of capital-intensive as well as labor-intensive branches of production with another correctly noticed fact - the existence in the capitalist system of a tendency of profitability in different branches of production to level out.

As regards his other theses, such as the irreconcilability of class interests and the inevitability of progressive impoverishment of the working masses, as we saw they are refuted by the conditions reigning in present day capitalist societies.

Regarding a tendency to "concentration of capital" ominous for the fate of capitalism, based on the greater stability of large enterprises during economic crises, with a proletarianization of small proprietors connected with it, it should be noted that this prediction was not fulfilled in a number of branches, among them agriculture.

During the deep and prolonged crisis in the thirties of this century, average peasant households turned out to be more stable than large agrarian latifundia using hired labor.

In addition, investigations conducted as long ago as the beginning of this century showed that an expansion of production does not invariably bring a reduction of prices and an increase in the competitive ability of an enterprise.
The profitability of an enterprise, despite an increase of its production, falls if by this it oversteps the line of its so-called "optimum".

The fact that after sixty years of socialism in the Soviet Union it brought its inhabitants:
a police regime and unheard-of oppression;
having maintained social inequalities, a standard of living considerably lower than that in apitalist countries;
instead of a promised "brotherhood of peoples" an universal anti-semitism and enslavement of the nations neighboring the U.S.S.R.;
appear as the best proofs that the so-called "historical materialism" is only a fruit of Karl Marx's imagination.

It is impossible to deny that the economy of a country is one of the rather numerous factors determining its psychology, but even so it is absolutely impossible to agree with the assertion of Marx that the psychology of the inhabitants of a country is formed exclusively by its system of production.

Now we turn to an analysis of the socialist system of production and indicate its organic shortcomings which, apart from difficulties of a psychological character experienced by it, make it definitely inferior in comparison to the capitalist system of production.

In the Soviet Union, after the liquidation of the White Armies and conclusion of the peace with Poland, nothing hindered Lenin from using his power, gained thanks to his perfidious and conscienceless, but nonetheless successful tactics, to realize the socialist doctrine in peasant Russia.
However in the very first steps, in their attempt to cram the multicolored and multifaceted life of the country into the rationalist Marxist formula like into a "Procrustuses' bed", the Bolsheviks stumbled across insurmountable obstacles and difficulties which forced them to partially postpone and even to take final leave of some of Marxism's basic positions.
Along with the "New Economic Policy" (NEP) proclaimed by Lenin in 1921, according to which, as a respite, free trading and private initiative were temporarily restored, they were compelled to relinquish forever the so-called "wage-levelling", by which each was supposed to give according to his means and receive according to his needs.
They were also forced to restore to its full extent the appreciation of the significance of the family as a neccessary and irreplaceable nucleus in the socialist society.
Subsequently, a couple of decades later, in a crucial moment of the Second World War, Stalin was compelled, contrary to constant emphasis until then on the international and cosmopolitan character of socialist society, to seek salvation by appealing to the national feelings of the Russian people and their devotion to their native land, resurrecting the cult of the national heroes and military leaders (Alexander Nevsky, Suvorov and Kutuzov).

The fact that, after a quarter of a century of socialism, the Soviet fighters surrendered by the millions to the tune of the International and only the rallying cry appealing, (as in good old times) to their patriotic feelings and their love for their homeland created the heroism of "Stalingrad", demonstrated again the bankruptcy of the Marxist dialectic.

But what about the socialist system of production? Did this system justify itself as such?
Did it compensate humanity for the enormous sacrifices required for its realization?
An answer to this question is indispensable for putting in the right perspective and evaluate the events of the Soviet past.
Furthermore, an answer to this question gives us a key to an understanding of events in the Soviet Union of the present (written in 1977).

Setting about an evaluation of the socialist system I would like first of all to discard the myth that the deprivation of civil liberties and compulsion employed in all socialist countries is an integral part of a socialist program.
In reality this suppression only becomes inevitable in socialist countries because their production system has failed in its basic function - the supply of the population with neccessities.

The Berlin "Wall" is not the only symbol of this failure - this failure is proclaimed by all kinds of statistics testifying to the lower standard of living of the populations of the socialist countries caused by a lower productivity of human labor there. The above is clearly illustrated by the following facts:

in the agricultural sector a farmer in the United States produces roughly ten times more of agrarian products than does a Soviet Kolkhoznik.

in the industrial sector a Soviet worker, in order to buy an automobile, has to work as many years as his American counterpart does months.

What causes the low productivity of human labor in a socialist economy?

I had confidential conversations with loyal communists who were attempting to remove the stigma of hopelessness from this undisputable fact. They explained it by the absence of an element of "personal interest" as a stimulus toward initiative and even towards work in a socialist economy, i.e. by difficulties of an exclusively psychological character.

By this they emphasized the temporary, transitional character of the difficulties experienced by the socialist economies for, according to the Marxist dialectic, with the socialization of the means of production, "social interests" would replace "personal interests" as a stimulus towards economic activity.

In reality, however, the situation is much worse: even setting aside the question of the correctness of the Marxist dialectic with its optimistic prognosis about the future, today's difficulties of a psychological character in the socialist economy are only a part of the true problem.

In reality the low productivity and the low standard of living in the socialist countries are also caused by serious deficiencies in their economic system.

However, in order to be able to point out these deficiencies, I must first touch upon several basic economic concepts and principles. We call effective a human activity which is directed towards the satisfaction of human needs and as such it makes sense if it is productive - i.e. if the value of the result is greater than the value of the means expended or, expressing it in economic terms, when the value of the product exceeds the cost of its manufacture.

Since the productivity of the economy's activity determines the degree of the population's welfare, the so-called basic economic principle dictates the indispensability of obtaining the greatest result with the least means.

In a capitalist economy a strict observance of the basic economic principle, i.e. the achievement of maximum productivity, is automatically controlled by the market price, which in the free market is determined not only by supply and demand, but also by competition, i.e. by the struggle of products for a market.

It is this, the free market price, which does not tolerate activity which contradicts the economic principle; neither does it tolerate unfavourable objective conditions for production such as remoteness from sources of energy and raw materials or an absence of markets, which lead to an insufficient utilization of the enterprises' productive capacity.

It is the price which, in the struggle for a market stimulates tireless efforts to improve the quality of a product and reduce its cost through the use of new and better processes and technology in production and distribution.

The market price is what stands guard over the "natural process" in economic life, allowing only the strong and healthy to remain alive and eliminating without forbearance all that is unhealthy from the point of view of productivity and quality.

It should be noted that the market price acts not only in a repressive but also in a preventive and instructive manner - it not only punishes violations of the economic principle, it also averts them, constantly reminding us of the neccessity of comparing the value of our efforts with the value of the result, i.e. to compute.

Besides being the automatic enforcer of the economic principle, the market price serves also as a barometer which reflects to what degree each human need is satisfied and the degree of urgency of that need.

This points out the exceptionally important role of the consumer in the capitalist economy.

It is the consumer who, by determining his needs and the degree of their urgency and possessing full freedom in the choice of the means of their satisfaction, has the last and decisive word.

It is the consumers' needs which, in conclusion, regulate production and give direction to capital investment in the national economy.

It is he who, with his free choice, as a result of the market mechanism influences the price of the product and the profitability of an enterprise and by this frequently decides the question of its life and death.

From the above we can see that the free market mechanism in its determination of prices leads undeviatingly not only to a productive national economy cleansed of everything unhealthy, but also guarantees the accomplishment of its basic function, leading to the fullest and best satisfaction of the population's needs while at the same time stimulating the use of an enhanced technology.

In contrast to capitalism, in the socialist system of production the price is established not by a market mechanism but by a monopolist producer - the government.

As a result of the absence in the socialist economy of the market price - of the automatic enforcer of the economic principle and the barometer registering the degree of satisfaction of human needs and their importance, maximum productivity is not achieved in it and the hierarchy of importance and urgency of consumers' needs are disregarded; to express it in simple terms - the socialist system produces with relatively high expense and not that which the population really needs.

The absence of competition, a consequence of the monopolistic position of the producer, influences not only the quality of goods, it leads also to a restriction of the freedom of choice of the consumer in the means of satisfaction of his needs, and what is still worse - to a technology backward in the process of production.

In addition the fact that, in a so-called planned economy, not human needs through the market mechanism but an all-powerful bureaucrat dictates the quantity as well as the quality of production and determines the direction of capital investment, has a number of other negative consequences.

Accompanied, as a rule, by demands of sacrifices to be made by the population in the present with the promise of a better future (which, as the reality of the socialist countries showed, is stubbornly refusing to appear), in actuality this leads only to a distortion of the structure of the national economy - to a disproportion between heavy industry, producing instruments of production and light industry, producing objects in general demand - and as a result to a disregard of the vital needs of the population.

What is even worse, however, are the actions of the bureaucrats in a planned economy uncontrolled by a market mechanism, which lead undeviatingly to capital investment little justfied economically.

The results of such uncontrolled excesses of the bureaucrats are vividly illustrated by typical for socialist economies facts from the recent past of the Soviet Union:

In pursuit of the vital neccessities, the urban population of Soviet Russia stood the larger part of their lives queueing up in lines day and night - hungry and in rags, in slush during the fall, in the cold and ringing frost during the winter;

In the cities of the Soviet Union houses literally fell to pieces due to neglect; in apartments where in Czarist times one family had lived, at least ten huddled in inhumane conditions;

In the words of eyewitnesses, an entire village had the use of only one metal saucepan - the enumeration of similar facts could go on for ever and ever;

Simultaneously, the Metro was being built in Moscow, (outfitted with every kind of luxury and excess), with an expenditure of enormous human and material resources - just to lead the world astray about the real achievements of the socialist economy; at that very same time, disregarding the population's vital needs, Russia was being outfitted with an abundance of newly built "Cheops pyramids", i.e. structures which demanded an enormous investment of human labor and materials, but whose economic justification, from the point of view of improvement of the lamentable living conditions of the population amounted to zero.

Instead of healing the wounds inflicted by the civil war and rebuilding what was destroyed, as well as undertaking what was needed in order to alleviate the transition to a different economic system, the communist regime began (with the help of the "Cheka",the secret police), to populate enormous empty expanses of Siberia, where they hurriedly set about the construction of gigantic projects which, if a hierarchy of urgency was observed, would become due only in the next century.

Thus we see that the lower standard of living caused by a lower productivity of human labor and an absence of structural harmony in economies using a socialist system of production are due not only to difficulties of a psychological character; they are due mainly to organic defects of this system - to the fact that in the so-called planned economy the automaticity of the market economy is being replaced by a bureaucrat who is unable to cope with the task, but is an integral part of the system nevertheless.

Unfortunately, the consequences of the economic failures were not only of an economic character.

The significance of the fact that the socialist production system has turned out to be retrogressive in fulfillment of its basic function has, according to my observations, still not received a full and proper evaluation in the "free world". The failure of the socialist system has a multiplicity of consequences, it determines not only the standard of living of the population, but having put a brand on the life of the country, it also dictates the internal as well as external policies of the "mother-country of socialism" - this is still not truly realized in the free world.

I do not agree with the prevailing opinion that the absence of civil liberties prevailing in all countries with a socialist system of production is an integral part of a socialist program.

In reality the socialists themselves would "be glad to go to paradise, but their sins won't let them enter".

The cruel fact that the socialist system of production does not justify the hopes set on it, makes an abiding system of oppression inevitably an integral part of socialist practice and the lack of civil liberties permanent.

The question of whether we could expect in the future a liberalization of the political regimes of the socialist countries even if they hold on to their production system (as many in the free world, including several Communist parties, hope) should be answered with a categorical "no!"

Freedom and socialism, in as much as its production system is hopelessly regressive as a consequence of serious organic deficiencies, are irreconcilable and mutually exclusive.

When you have no convincing answer to the questions: why does the American farmer produce tenfold what the Soviet farmer does and why does the Soviet worker have to work as many years as his American counterpart does months in order to purchase an automobile, and if, contrary to common sense, you wish to hold on to socialism - no matter what the cost - nothing else remains for you to do but to slap the questioner and say: "don't ask stupid questions!"

The fact that freedom poses a mortal danger to the socialist doctrine, since a free person would undoubtedly reject an economic system unable to manage its basic task no longer appears to be a secret for Communist leaders.

This explains the fact that, after a short so-called "thaw" under Khrushchev when the population was given an opportunity to breath more freely, the authorities, scenting the danger to the regime that freedom poses, hurriedly returned to the old ways, having replaced labor camps with insane asylums.

The hurried, overpowering reaction of Communist countries when Dubcek, the new head of the Czechoslovak Communists attempted to liberalize the regime and to introduce certain liberties can be explained by their realization that freedom is the death knell for socialist doctrine.

The fact is that the attainment of socialism did not solve the real problems of modern society, neither with respect to relative improvement of material conditions nor with respect to a just distribution of the national product. The cessation of "exploitation of man by man" was by no means a panacea for all human ills and did not make peaple any better - it just created a system of bondage.

The above also engendered the fact that a limitless mockery of the truth - the barefaced lie is especially characteristic for Marxist societies.

Brazen, naked, obvious falshood, presented as indispensable, is not only legitimized there - it is prescribed there and appears today as an inseparable part of and bulwark of the communist regime.

When in the thirties the indescribably difficult life conditions in the Soviet Union were catastrophically worsening with each day, Soviet citizens, by order from above, had to declare that "life became better and living merrier" and, in this epoch of bloody Stalinist nightmare, to sing, to an accompaniment of clanking of chains of millions of prisoners in the camps: "I know no other such country where a person breathes so freely".

The East German Socialist Republic, occupied by Russian troops, had guarded itself from the whole world by a barbed wire wall and converted the country into not only a moral but a physical prison for its citizens; it calls itself German but, in distinction from "West Germany", where the inhabitants, as is well known, enjoy civil liberties, shamelessly emphasizes that it is a "German Democratic Republic".

Falsehood is neccessary in Marxist society, not only in order to conceal its misery and the failures of an economic character, but also to tell all kinds of lies about countries with a capitalist system of production.

Falsehood is indispensable there in the first place in order to justify Marxist society's original sin, the cruel basic truth, that there ideas are not for the good of people, but people there are for the benefit of an idea.

Not the well-being and happiness of people but the triumph of the idea of socialism appears to be the main and ultimate goal of present day Marxist society. People serve there only as a means, and their happiness and well-being are mercilessly sacrificed for the accomplishment of the main goal.

Falsehood is needed there to hide the fact that in the Marxist society, thought is held in a vise since progressive ideas which found expression in the rallying cry of the French revolution - liberty, justice and equality, are welcome there, not insofar as they serve humanity, but only insofar as they facilitate the successful realization of the socialist doctrine; such a fate befell literature and art there after a label was pasted on them with the inscription "socialist realism".

It was neccessary to lie and to deny the bitter truth:

that the realization of the socialist doctrine has not created a classless society free of inequalities, injustices and social antagonisms, a friendly family of peoples deprived of nationalist dissentions and hatreds;

that the new society, even more so than the Romanov autocracy, maintains itself by the force of bayonets of the especially created "Praetorian Guard", well paid and abundantly provided for even in those times when the rest of the population suffers bitterly from need and deprivations;

that it manages, by a system of terror, espionage and treachery which would do honor to the Czarist "Okhrana", to hold the people in fear and obedience.

The absolute failure of the Marxist doctrine, as I already mentioned, is also one of the main factors determining the Soviet Union's aggressive foreign policy after the Second World War.

Analyzing the latter one asks oneself, by what can be explained the fact that, having unfinished business up to its neck at home, the Soviet Union spares neither efforts nor means for Communist work in countries that lie far outside the sphere of its vital interests.

Before the Second World War, when they needed to find an explanation for economic failures, they conveniently found "scape goats" right at home.

First it was the opposition of the left, then of the right, then the guilty ones turned out to be Communist leaders who only yesterday had guided the work of realization of the party program, but "in reality" were "traitors".

The verity, known already to the political leaders of ancient Rome, that in order to rule, it is neccessary to give the masses "bread and circuses" was also well known in the Kremlin; thus they arranged "show trials" in which they forced sequential victims, through terrible tortures, to repent publicly of crimes which they had not committed in order to give "circuses"to the masses .

After the war, due to a continued lack of "bread" (in the broad sense of this word) in sufficient quantity, they began to seek and find abroad the "circuses" doubly neccessary for the masses now - "today, comrades, we liberated Czechoslovakia, tomorrow Cuba, the day after tomorrow Angola - and so forth".

A wish to demonstrate to the masses within the country as well as to those easily deceived worldwide the unvacillating faith of the party leaders in the messianic character of Communism that would bring to the whole world liberation and a better life in spite of failures and disappointments, plays probably no small role in the aggressive foreign policy of the Politburo.

But Communism is not a movement at the head of which, according to the words of Alexander Blok: " Jesus Christ is in front, in a white halo of roses".
Oh no, categorically no!
Of this speak, or more truly cry the facts from the present as well as the recent past:
It is the Moscow Politburo, by the treaty of Molotov-Ribbentrop in 1939, who set fire to the conflagration of the Second World War, in the delusion that there existed then an equilibrium of forces between the Allies and Hitler - hoping this would lead to a repetition of the First World War and, through the repetition of bloody but futile "Verduns" and "Sommes", to the mutual annihilation of the combatants. As a result, this would lead to an opportunity for Moscow to hoist the "red flag" without hindrance over a Europe inundated by blood and tears and covered by millions of corpses, predominatly of workers, of whom the Bolsheviks impudently proclaimed themselves to be the sole defenders.
A crime, as we see, so monstrous that "Satan himself will not find recompense" for it.

After the war it was this " homeland of socialism" which, using perfidy, treachery and bloody coercion, enslaved all the neighboring peoples, imposing upon them both a regressive socialist economic system, poverty and despotism.

Taking into account that hunger and hopelessness are Communism's best allies and using the perfidious but successful tactic of "October", the Soviet Union, inflating hatred and sowing strife, celebrates its sequential bloody funeral feast - first in Korea, then in Vietnam, then in Cambodia, then contrary to the Marxist dogma, pretending to be a devoted friend of "Pan-Arabism", in the strategically exceptionally important Middle East.

Thus, today the aggressive foreign policy of the armed to the teeth Soviet Union represents the main threat to the security of not only capitalist but also of those Communist countries who wish to preserve their independence from Moscow, such as China, Yugoslavia and Rumania.

Summing up, we see that the socialist production system, because of its many organic defects is hopelessly regressive and that the consequences of this fact are not restricted only to a population's lower standard of living, but that this fact is the main reason for the police regime within the Soviet Union and its aggressive policy abroad.

The reader of these lines will remember, I hope, that at one time, describing the crimes of the Bolsheviks in "October", I delayed the passing of final sentence and determining the place of Lenin and his comrades-in-arms in History.
In this I pointed out the fact that the Bolsheviks, bringing about the birth of socialism, even though in indescribable torments, perhaps might have given the world a progressive economic system which would compensate the coming generations for the sufferings of the previous ones - and by this would justify in part the crimes perpetrated by them before and after "October".
We are deprived of this illusion by an analysis of facts and events which show that Karl Marx's Das Capital is not the "New Evangel" (as they long tried to convince us), and that socialism's production system is hopelessly regressive, with tragic consequences in more than economic respect, the end of which is still not to be seen today; thus nothing, in my opinion, can prevent Lenin from occupying the place in History which belongs to him by his deserts - that of the greatest evil genius of humanity in our epoch.
It should be noted here that the concluding act of the drama, of which the activity of Lenin and his cohorts served as prologue, is still not written even today. Regardless of the fact whether it bears the labels "cold war" or "detente", the inexorable struggle between a world in which an individual and his welfare are the final goal and a world in which he serves only as a means for the realization of a doctrine continues with unabated force.

We will turn now to events in the country after the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly.
The peace talks at Brest-Litovsk dragged on for several months. Leon Trotsky, head of the Russian delegation, refused to sign the disgraceful peace conditions dictated by German general Max Hoffmann, announcing at the same time that Russia considered the war to be ended.

The treaty was signed at the insistance of Lenin after the Germans broke the armistice without encountering any resistance on the part of the Russian army and occupied all the Baltic lands, part of Western Belorussia to the Dniepr and, moving towards Petrograd, occupied the city of Pskov. In Petrograd they joked then that the "Pskovites" found themselves abroad.

A month earlier, in January, the Germans signed a peace treaty with the Ukrainian Rada which declared the Ukraine to be a republic independent of Russia.

The Russian general Skoropadsky was put by the Germans as Hetman at the head of the civil government of the Ukraine.

Besides the Ukraine, the granary of Russia, the German troops occupied the whole Donets basin with its fields of high-calory coal, then the only one in Russia, and the Don Army Region, including the city Rostov-on-the-Don. The unprecedented cruel conditions of "Brest" shook the country to its foundations and delivered a shattering blow to the prestige of the new authority which had accepted them.

Already in the early spring of 1918 several focal points took form around which forces intending to battle against the central authority began to organize.

In Novocherkask predominantly Cossack units began to gather around general Kaledin. After the suicide of general Kaledin these troops took a pro-German orientation under the command of a Cossack Ataman, general Krasnov. In the Kuban, on the Caucasus, the so-called Volunteer Army took form, consisting predominantly of Czarist officers, which under the command of generals - at first Alekseyev, then Kornilov, Denikin and Vrangel, conducted a stubborn struggle with the Bolsheviks in the course of two years, with varying success. On the Volga a group of the former members of the Constituent Assembly (predominantly SRs), headed by Avksentev, formed a third active anti-Bolshevik Eastern Front. They recruited a force from the Czecho-Slovak Legion which consisted of the Czech soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army who had been taken prisoner by the Russians.

In addition a confused demobilization, having begun after the conclusion of peace without any kind of preparation or plan, entering into history under the name "Krylenko" who replaced the brutally murdered general Dukhonin at the post of Commander-in-Chief, brought indescribable chaos to the country and temporarily paralyzed completely the country's rail transport.

Having sacked the military storehouses, taking away all that they came accross, beginning with horses, live cattle and various goods and ending with machine guns, a multimillion soldier mass moved from the front, moving by any means to the east. Something hardly imaginable happened to the railroads. Not contenting themselves with the slowly moving freight trains, enormous crowds of soldiers stormed passenger trains, bursting in through doors and windows, the panes of which they smashed with their wooden boxes, clogging all entrances and exits, all accesses to the lavatories, terrorizing by this both the passengers and officials. They traveled on the steps of cars, on brakes and on roofs.

The occupation by the Germans of the provision-rich Ukraine stifled to extremes the food supply of the cities, especially that of multimillion Petrograd, already troubled by the cessation of barter with the villages.

In these difficult days, when the new authority was weakened by deep internal schisms during the peace negotiations, the Bolshevik leadership, headed by Lenin, quickly closed its ranks and with unprecedented presence of mind and energy started a stubborn struggle for its existence when it seemed everything around it disintegrated. The capital of the amputated Russian Empire was transferred to Moscow. Petrograd became the capital of the newly formed "Northern Commune", at the head of which was put Lenin's close comrade-in-arms, Gregory Zinovyev.

The old Czarist army was replaced by the "Red Army" organized by Leon Trotsky. Persons from the command staff of the Czarist army were enlisted for the organization and command of the new army at the initiative of Trotsky. They worked as specialists under the observation of individuals devoted to the new regime, so-called "political commissars".

In the conditions taking shape, to the share of the Red Army fell first of all the task of saving the cities from starvation.

Provision-requisition detachments, created for this purpose, pursued the forceful extortion of grain from the countryside.

In order to ensure success for this enterprise Lenin and his cohorts, sticking to the old style of endeavors which served them well before, played on the people's brute instincts. They began to inflame the hatred of the land-starved peasants for their more prosperous fellow villagers through "Committees of the Impoverished", organized by them in every village.

The land-starved peasants did not suspect that in the near future they also would be driven, against their will as landless farm hands, into the kolkhoses founded by the Bolsheviks; they zealously fulfilled the role of informers and helpers in the requisition of grain - as the Bolsheviks intended they should.

Trotsky emerged as an exceptionally energetic, talented organizer and military leader in the unfolding civil war.

Riding around the front in a special train and inspiring by his fiery speeches and calls to struggle against the counter-revolutionary oppressors, Trotsky managed to alter the situation on the Eastern Front to the benefit of the "Reds".

I would like to tell briefly here about the fate of the Czar's family, of the last Romanovs.

After renouncing his throne for himself and his son, Nicholas returned to Czarskoye Selo, where he lived under house arrest in his palace with his whole family for about half a year.

After England refused to give him haven, changing its original decision, the Provisional Government transportred the whole family with servants to Siberia, to the city of Tobolsk, where the October revolution found them.

From there the Red authorities transferred them to Ekaterinburg where, in connection with the approach of counterrevolutionary forces in July, 1918, the whole family was shot along with the servants in the cellar of Ipatyev's house, where they lived.

The winter of 1917/1918 did not bring anything new into David's and my life - David studied medicine and I was busy with the shipping of Mamomtov's Ultramarine. In Petrograd hunger reigned in the full meaning of this word. The feeling of hunger did not leave us even when in fact we were satiated.

The thought of food was constantly drilling through our brains and the question of where they were "giving out" (distributing) something was almost the sole topic of conversations.

Postal packages with foodstuffs which, until the Germans occupied the Ukraine, now and then got through to us from Gomel, were a great festive event for us.

I remember that bread would come to us already moldy, but there could be no question of throwing it out and we ate it all with the mold.

David and I licked clean to the very bottom a glass jar of honey which arrived broken, taking the risk of swallowing some small glass fragments.

At the end of April I accompanied to Moscow my brother David, who was returning to our parents in Gomel. In order to get to Gomel he had to cross illegally, with some adventures, the Russian-German demarcation line near the city of Bryansk.

In contrast to descriptions of that time in fiction (Pasternak's Zhivago), according to my observations, the provision conditions in Moscow then were more than satisfactory by Petrograd standards.

At Okhotny Ryad, I remember, they openly sold foodstuffs. In addition, one could buy provisions from the meshochniki at numerous Moscow rail stations.

My childhood friend Alesha Perevozky lived then in Moscow with his uncle Solomon Mushkat. He had been drafted and, as a Jew, served in the Student Battalion in Czaritsyn. Upon my arrival in Moscow I looked him up after some search. I remember that he and I went repeatedly to the Italyanskoye cafe where we ate unlimited quantities of pastries with our tea.

The fact that in Petrograd, where to I returned, reigned completely different provision conditions, can be deduced from several episodes which now come to mind.

After David's departure I took up residence at 7 Rozhdestvenskaya street (in Peski) at the widow Bezpatyevaya's, who lived there together with her daughter. Mikhaylovna, our maidservant, a former serf of the Sheremetev's would bring our bread rations, which then amounted to an eighth of a pound - fifty grams a day, from the cooperative store.

Entering with the pound of bread for us four for two days, she would exclaim: "Well, what's here to eat, damn them," and then would add, "in my time I have snacked on Philippov rolls to my fill, but you, my young falcons, after all you did not have your chance!"

With all her pity for the young, however, if I forgot to hide my portion of bread, I would not find it upon returning home later since Mikhaylovna, tormented by hunger, would eat up the bread.

In those days they talked about heartrending scenes between parents and their children when the former would come hungry home from work and found out that the children had eaten up their portion of bread.

At that time my colleague Lazar D. Zakharin and I would eat dinner in the dining hall of the "League for Equal Rights for Women" at 100 Nevsky Prospect. There one of the waitresses told us secretly that for two weeks now we had been eating horse meat and that the soup which she had just served us was cooked with horse bones.

I remember that what she told us made such a strong impression on us that we left the dining hall without touching the soup. But "hunger is no auntie" and in the end we began to eat horse meat regularly and even made bold to joke: "Bring up the horses!" we said, sitting at the table, to which the waitress, putting the plates with their contents before us, would answer us: "The horses are waiting, gentlemen."

However unlikely this may sound, in those hungry days chocolate was what saved me. One could buy chocolate bars of the Moscow factory Eynem from sellers on the street at very high prices - I could afford them since I was earning a lot of money from the shipment of Ultramarine.

Of events in the summer of 1918 in Petrograd that were to be fraught with consequences, two assassinations should be mentioned: one of Uritsky, Derzhinsky's deputy as head of the Cheka in Petrograd, by the student Kanegisser, the other of one of the leaders of the "Northern Commune", the Bolshevik Volodarsky. The Bolsheviks responded to these killings with the so-called "Red Terror" i.e. by mass executions, without trials and investigations, of persons who in their opinion were "enemies of the proletarian revolution", so called "counterrevolutionaries".

The circumstance that the student Kanegisser, as well as Fanya Kaplan, who would make an attempt on Lenin's life in 1921, were Jewish, points out a fact little known in the world: along with participation in the Bolshevik movement, Jews were also active on the other side of the barricade (not only by word but also by deed) and frequently they paid for it with their lives.

I emphasize this fact since during the flare up of the civil war tens of thousands of the peaceful Jewish population had to pay with their lives (in regions occupied by the so-called "Whites") for just the fact that several of the Bolshevik leaders, such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others were their coreligionists.

As a result, during the civil war the Jewish population of Russia was forced to regard the Red Army as their saviors and to meet them enthusiastically, despite the fact that its arrival brought complete financial ruin to the majority of Jews. This could not help but promote in the world the myth that pro-Bolshevik sentiments were prevailing among the Jewish population of Russia.

As I already mentioned, the Bolsheviks, for lack of qualified personel with which to replace the old administration and in addition being occupied with concluding the war, did not hurry overmuch with their new reforms.

Because of this the old procedures were still in force at the university and in order to receive credit for six semesters at the department of jurisprudence, it was neccessary for me to pass three more examinations in the course of the spring session.

I passed the first two examinations - on the History of the Philosophy of Law (the textbook of professor Evgeny Trubetsky) and of Criminal Law (the textbook of professor Deryuzhinsky) without difficulty. It went somewhat differently for me with the third examination on the History of Russian Law (the textbook of professor Korkunov).

For various reasons, among them "cherchez la femme", I went to the examination on the 13th of June very poorly prepared. I relied on number thirteen, for me a fortunate number (the day of my birth) which, as we will see, this time did not let me down, either.

As a rule the students tried not to let the well prepared students take the examination first, so as not to raise the level of the professor's demands.

When, coming to the examination, I announced to my fellow-students who were already there that "I did not know a thing" and asked them to allow me to go first, the students at first did not believe me, but then permitted me to go to assistant professor Grigorev who, in comparison to the other good-natured and smiling assistant professor Novitsky, seemed an unfriendly and stricter examiner.

Answering the "ticket" which one drew, I remember that I mixed up the law of the ancient with the medieval Russian period. I somewhat amended the impression with my answers on the question of "St. George's Day".

In ancient Russia, the serfs could change their owners on "St. George's Day" and when this law was abrogated a proverb went "there's St George's Day for you, granny". "Colleague, you know very little, but I will give you credit anyway" told me the "severe" assistant professor Grigorev.

The sugary assistant professor Novitsky, on the other hand, failed, one after another, the first three students coming to him to take the examination, by which he confirmed the truth that appearances are deceptive.

Having concluded my university business, I did not leave Petrograd in which "White Nights" had already begun, right away. Despite the fact that the provisions situation was getting progressively worse - corpses of horses who had died of starvation lying in the street were a frequent phenomenon - I remained in Petrograd for two whole months more.

I left Petrograd at the end of August, 1918, when an epidemic of cholera was added to hunger. Those ill with cholera awaiting their turn to be received lay on the pavement around Obukhovskaya hospital.

I left Petrograd from the Czarskoselski station by the Moscovsko-Vindavo-Rybinskaya railroad joining Petrograd with Vitebsk.

When I heard at the little station of Oredezh that in the buffet they were selling "honey cake" at twenty rubles a pound, I quickly jumped from the car and bought a pound of "honey cake" since in Petrograd everything that was connected with flour had disappeared completely.

When the train started off, however, I discovered that I was given as change from a hundred-ruble "Freedom Loan" note (which then plied as money) two fake forty-ruble "kerenki".

They nicknamed "kerenki" the square form paper money issued by the Provisional Government in notes of twenty and forty rubles.

According to the so-called "Gresham's Law", by which bad money always ousts the good from circulation, "kerenki" completely ousted the old so-called "Nikalayevskiye" paper money. Everybody hid the latter, for it had a higher market value.

Coming to Vitebsk, I could not believe my eyes when I saw that they were selling freely and without restriction good quality bread in enormous round loaves of many pounds. I remember how I pounced and bought bread in such a large quantity that, however much I tried later, I was not able to eat it up.

I crossed the Russian-German demarcation line without difficulty in a cart at night, near the city of Orsha. From Orsha I went by steamboat downstream on the Dnieper (which served as the border between the part of Belorussia occupied by the Germans and Russia), with a stop in Mogilev, to Zhlovin (a station on the Libava-Romnenskaya railroad), where I changed to a train which brought me to my parents in Gomel.

I heard along the way that the German ambassador to Lenin's government, Count Mirbach, was killed by terrorists in Moscow. The assassination in Kiev of general Eichhorn, commander of the German occupation troops in the Ukraine, dates also back to that time.

Life in the Ukraine, occupied by the Germans, was relatively quiet and moreover quite well-fed. Markets were overflowing with all kinds of food products.

Life flowed in the old way since the Germans did not interfere in the internal administration - their presence was almost unfelt.

The government of general Skoropadsky, the Ukrainian Hetman, in whose hands lay the civil authority, did not undertake anything to Ukrainize the country.

As before, Russian remained the official language, the teaching language in the schools and, as I could personally see later, also in the universities.

Local newspapers were printed in Russian - Gomelskaya Zhizn and Polesye.

In distinction from the "Oberost" - lands occupied by the Germans before Brest-Litovsk, in the Ukraine everyone could move about freely and trains plied on schedule.

As money, besides the old "kerenki" and "Nikolayevskiye", Ukrainian "karbovantsi" were also put into circulation.

Since the Germans could communicate only with the Jews, their attitude towards Jews then was benevolent.

The German commandant of the city of Gomel, Hauptmann Kvandt, was an admirer of my sister Anya and came frequently to our house.

With my arrival in Gomel our whole family was gathered there and, since my sister Emma was expecting her second child, we rented a large apartment in the house of Dr. Shevunevsky. In October Emma was safely delivered of a daughter who was given the name Eva.

The Bolshevik overthrow did not yet have time to influence the life in the city of Gomel.

All enterprises, commercial as well as industrial, were in the hands of their old owners and since the connection between the city and the village was still intact, there were food products in abundance.

Life in the city of Gomel was in full swing and the popular coffeehouse Nikoforova on Rumantsevskaya, the main street, was always overflowing.

In the local Miniature theater the singer-storyteller Utesov was performing with great success a ditty then popular in the Ukraine: "Hey little apple, where are you rolling to, you'll fall into the German's hands and you won't return anymore!"

Bantering also over the peace which the Ukrainian Rada signed with Germany, he also sang: "Signed a peace treaty with the neighbors and it seems they bungled it - the neighbors will take the bread and won't even give us a sniff of it".

In September I went to Kiev and, on the basis of my matriculation certificate with credit for six semesters at the Petrograd University, I was accepted into the last year of studies at the Department of Jurisprudence of the Kiev University of St. Vladimir.
On the day of my arrival, I remember, the burial procession of Marshak, the deceased jeweler famous in the South, passed along Kreshchatik, the central street of Kiev.
Kiev experienced days of unprecedented growth and was terribly overcrowded in connection with the fact that to save themselves from the Bolsheviks, the Russian aristocracy and the wealthy bourgoisie fled from the capitals to sojourn in Kiev under the wing of general Skoropadsky.
Of the capital theaters, the Petrograd "Bibabo" had already migrated there.
In a coffehouse on Bibikovsky Boulvard, I remember, the famous cinematic actress Vera Kholodnaya sat, together with the actor Osip Runich at a neighboring table; along with her beauty, especially her eyes, I was struck by the waxen yellowness of the skin of her face.
Vera Kholodnaya played the main female roles in a number of films, among them "At the Fireplace", a gypsy romance very popular then.
Of other film actresses I also recall Mrs. Lisenko who, together with the actor Mozhukhin, played the main roles in a film to the words of Alexander Vertinsky's song, "Bal Gospoden" ("The Lord's Ball").
Maksimov and Polonsky should also be mentioned as then popular male film actors.
Vera Kholodnaya died soon afterward, still in the fall of 1918, in Odessa of the "Spanish flu", as was nicknamed the influenza raging then, of which tens if not hundreds of thousands were victims, in the United States as well.
Kiev, lying on the Dnieper, with its "Vladimirskaya Hill" and "Merchant Garden", was considered one of the most picturesquely situated cities in Russia.
Having lived in Kiev a short time in a hotel, since there was no chance of finding a room with a private family, I had to return to Gomel without visiting the celebrated Kievopechersky Monastery.

Meanwhile, in the fall of 1918, military activities on the Western front in France took a highly unfavorable turn for the Germans who initially achieved large successes. The Allied troops, operating under a united command with French marshall Foch at the head, managed not only to halt the very successfully unfolding German advance in the course of the spring and summer but, widely employing tanks in great quantities, to force them to begin to retreat to their borders.
Since in their last advance the Germans, wanting at last to secure a favorable outcome, had hurled all the human and material resources at their disposal, nothing could save them now from defeat, the more so because their foes now had at their disposal the enormous unused human and material resources of the United States.
In this hopeless situation for Germany, in order to avoid a complete devastation by war, the new German government, with prince Max of Baden at the head, agreed, at the insistence of the German military General Headquarters, to a full and unconditional capitulation after Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated and went to Holland.

German delegates with Erzberger at the head signed the terrible for Germany conditions of the armistice on the 11th of November, 1918, in a railroad car in a forest near the French city of Compaigne.
Germany's allies Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria had capitulated still earlier. In connection with the fact that by the conditions of the armistice Germany had to evacuate the lands occupied by her in the east before the 1st of January, 1919, the relatively tranquil life in the Ukraine, where the presence of German troops was a stabilizing factor, came to an end.

The following incident, of which I was witness, foresaw the fact that exceptionally difficult days were impending for the Jewish population of Ukraine.
This was still in November, right after the announcement of the forthcoming departure of the Germans, in Gomel, in the overflowing with visitors Nikorov coffehouse; one of the small tables was occupied by two officers of the Czarist army.
Suddenly, when one of them stood up and began to sing the old hymn: "God save the Czar", his comrade also rose and, at first saluting, putting his hand to his service cap, suddenly turned and with a shout: "You Jewish nozzle, why don't you salute!" knocked the hat off the head of a Jew sitting at a neighboring table with his fist.
This incident, which demonstrated the presence in the ranks of the "White Army" of a hooligan and reactionary-minded element and indicated one of the reasons of its failure, was also a harbinger of stormy days for the numerous Jewry of Ukraine.

But the impending reality exceeded the most gloomy expectations. Immediately after the departure of the Germans, the Ukraine became a theater of military activities: the Red Army and the "Denikintsy" (general Shkuro), as well as Petlura's "Self-Ruling Bands" disputed authority over the country among one another.
Moreover, numerous self-styled "Atamans" (Makhno, Marusya-Angel and others) also skirmished around the country, their bands mercilessly robbing and killing the inhabitants of cities temporarily seized by them.
With the exception of the Red Army, a hatred of the Jews united them all and everywhere their appearance was accompanied by robberies and murders of the peaceful Jewish population.
First place in this bloody work should be awarded to Shimon Petlura with his "Self-Ruling Bands". In the single city of Proskurov his cohorts murdered 3,000 innocent Jews.
Shimon Petlura, as is well known, was killed in Paris several years later by the Jew Shvartsbart, who was acquitted by a French jury.
This was a bloody spell in the life of the Jews in the Ukraine, with the death, in absolute numbers, of a greater number of Jews than in the butchery perpetrated under Bogdan Chmelnitsky in the seventeenth century.
For reasons unknown to me and still less understood, these tragic events do not find sufficient reflection neither in Jewish-American literature nor in its periodical press.
Their favorite theme remain pogroms in Czarist Russia. In the United States hardly a person can be found who has not heard of the pogrom in the city of Kishenev with its fifty Jewish victims.
But in these same United States few know and even fewer talk about the pogrom in Proskurov with its 3,000 Jewish victims.

Soon after my return from Kiev our family began to prepare its return to the native city of Wilno in connection with the impending departure of the Germans from the lands occupied by them in the east.

Regarding the three-year stay of our family in the city of Gomel, I should also mention a sorrowful episode in the life of my sister Anya - her unsuccessful romance with a certain doctor Kushelevsky who worked in the same hospital in which Anya worked as a volunteer nurse - this constituted a breaking point in her life. Since I only paid fleeting visits to Gomel, the details of this romance are unknown to me.

However, judging by what I heard from my mother, this was a heartbreaking experience for Anya, who apparently was by nature a so-called "lover of just one" - it not only left a mark on her external aspect, but also undermined her life forces.

RETURN TO WILNO

Sad condition of Wilno
Stormy period after German evacuation
Struggle between Soviets and Poles
Polish pogrom against Jews
Polish history
Jewish culture of Wilno, Zionism and Yiddishism
Yiddish theater, literarture
Antisemitism, Jewish assimilation
Difficult financial situation of the family
Logging in Koltynyany
Peace treaty
German reparations, territorial concessions
League of Nations
Horrors of trench warfare, total war
Wilno taken by the Soviets
ChEKA terror, arrest of brother-in law Aaron
Polish takeover by gen. Zheligowsky
My arrest, trip to Warsaw
Wilno's new geopolitical situation - "dead" borders
Lamentable conditions of sawmills
Father's newly started logging, export
Father's unfortunate distillery venture
Anya's loveless marriage
My romance with Zina
The "tragic menagerie" circle of friends

There were already frosts when in the middle of December, 1918, our whole family moved onto the return route to the native city of Wilno with the exception of my sister Emma's family who, having two tiny children, decided to winter in Gomel due to the cold.

Since by that time the movement of trains was already irregular and in addition, due to the quantity of baggage, we had to travel in unheated freight cars, this trip proved to be very difficult.

I recall how our freight car was stuck for a whole night during a twenty degree frost (-4 degrees Fahrenheit), at a small station near the town of Baranovich.

Having wrapped Mama and sister Anya up in all the featherbeds and blankets we had, we four men, in order not to freeze, spent the whole night on our feet, moving about and swinging our arms. Half alive, we finally reached our goal - Wilno.

Traveling from the station, I recall, the pitiful, lamentable appearance of the city astounded me right away - its low, neglected houses, narrow, crooked and in addition deserted streets, roadways paved with cobblestones and broken down wooden sidewalks.

How sharply it differed from the city which I recalled with yearning while I walked along the misty English Quay in beautiful Petrograd.

The city with which my recollections of a carefree childhood and youth were connected, never looked like I pictured it from a "beautifying distance".

The three-and-a-half-year occupation by the the Germans, whose policy expressed itself in a predatory exploitation of the natural riches of the country and in an unpityingly cruel attitude toward its population, placed a permanent imprint on the geographically well-arranged and, before the war, well-developing city.

Along with extortion of food products from peasants, the Germans cut forests in a predatory way, diregarding the logging plans, floating uncut logs along the Wilya and Niemen to East Prussia and in part, having put the sawmill of L. Shenyuk into action, sawing them into boards.

By a relentless removal of copper machine parts, of which Germany had an acute need because of the Allied blockade, entire factories' equipment was put out of commission and made inactive by the Germans, including those branches of industry which could have continued working, since their production depended on regional raw materials and local markets.

The difficult economic conditions for the city cut off from the world were aggravated even further by the German requisitions in the countryside which upset the barter system with the town and by the fact that the railroad could be used only with the permission of the occupation authority.

All these circumstances created extraordinary conditions, especially for the city population, as a result of which a large part of the Jewish poor literally died of starvation.

In these difficult times the official Rabbi Rubinstein (whose responsibilities were the registration of the Jewish populations' movements and the issue of birth certificates, marriage licences and death certificates), as well as doctors Shabad and Vygodsky distinguished themselves by their selfless work aimed at alleviating the lot of the city population by the organization of mutual help as well as in their efforts in relating to the occupation authorities.

All were later elected from the city of Wilno to the Polish legislative institutions, the first two as senators, the latter as a member of the Seym.

I should also note here that on a background of economic catastrophe for the population a few individuals, who managed to get included in the apparatus supplying the German military machine, managed to accumulate handsome fortunes. One of those doing well was my cousin Kasriel Gershater - the grandson of my grandmother Mera from her first marriage.

The city, which by its doleful look reminded one of a person having passed through a serious, debilitating illness, gradually revived with the return of those families who at one time had gone to Russia.

In addition, in connection with the revolution in Russia, our city became a stopping place on their way to Western Europe for a series of families of Russian plutocracy, such as the Moscow antiquarian Chernomordik, famous in his time, the Gorlini, large timber merchants, and others.

Upon our return we moved into our old apartment (on the corner of Wilenska and Mostova) in which our relatives had lived during our absence. Still a few months earlier my mother's cousin Lazar Shenyuk had returned from Moscow with his wife Clara, daughters Nina and Elena, son Kolya and wife - in 1915 Kolya had married for the first (but not the last) time.

My friend Alesha Perevozki came also back from Moscow to his parents who had not left Wilno.

The relative tranquility reigning in the city after our arrival did not, unfortunately, continue long.

After the evacuation effected by the Germans before the end of 1918, according to the conditions of the armistice, our city entered a stormy period of its history, the pages of which were written as a result of the paradoxes of which I had already spoken; namely the city of Wilno, the historic capital of Lithuania, lay on ethnically Belorussian soil and by the end of the First World war its indigenous population, besides the about 35% of Jews, was composed not of Lithuanians but of people who considered themselves Poles.

As early as the 1st of January, 1919, on the day following the departure of the Germans, our city became an arena of armed collision between the adherents of Soviet Russia and the more numerous and in addition better armed and organized members of a regional Polish fighting organization.

When the latter gained the upper hand, about ten adherents of the "Soviets" barricaded themselves in the building of the so-called "Railroad Circle", where they all perished to the last man, either by their own hand or that of the Poles besieging them. They did not make it till the time when they would have been delivered by the Red Army which occupied the city without battle on the 5th of January, 1919 and proclaimed the city of Wilno at first the capital of the Lithuanian and, soon after, of the Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. [1] Simultaneously, a Council of Worker and peasant Deputies got organized in Wilno, with the Pole Tsikhovsky as Chairman. Much earlier, under the protection of German occupation authorities, an independent Lithuanian Republic (Tariba) was created on the territory of ethnic Lithuania, with Smetona and Voldemaras at the head.

Although the city of Wilno was declared the capital of the new republic, the central governmental institutions of the "Tariba" were organized in Kovno (Kaunas).

The thrust of the Red Army in the direction of East Prussia halted with the occupation by it of the city of Wilno in view of the fact that "Tariba" enjoyed the protection of German troops.

It must not be forgotten that the year 1919 was the period of the civil war's height, when the Red Army had to battle with the troops of admiral Kolchak in the east, in the south with the Volunteer Army of general Denikin, in the northwest with general Yudenich and in the north with the troops of the Chaikovsky government.

Along with the Red Army a Cheka department came to the city and set to work, bearing the name of "Special Department", with comrade Olsky at the head (a brother of the popular Wilno lawyer, the Pole Leon Kulikovsky).

Arrests began with the goal, it is to be supposed, of strengthening authority and executions were carried out upon decision of the Special Department. i.e. without trial or investigation.

The victims were Poles, but there were some Jewish victims too. The merchant Shapiro was executed for alleged trade in foreign currency and the cabman Steinberg for transporting people to Lithuania (Kovno).

The fact that the executed Jews were punished not for belonging to "a class hostile to the proletariat", but for crimes allegedly perpetrated by them, calmed somewhat the circles of the former bourgoisie (to which our family belonged).

We, I remember, decided to resign ourselves to fate - this was in some measure facilitated by the fact that the communist idea had not yet lost its halo of justice in the eyes of us youths; moreover, we did not yet have even any vague notion of the horrors the realization of this idea would bring the country.

Following instruction from Moscow, the new Red authority did not undertake upon arrival any steps to alter the economic system of the regions occupied by them.

Neither did they show initiative to revive the economy paralyzed by the Germans and get the inactive factories and plants going.

---

[1] The Lithuanian Mitskevich Kapsyukas was proclaimed Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the new Soviet Republic.
Alexa Angeretis was appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Dimenstein of Labor, Weistein-Baranovsky of Nationalities' Affairs and at first Slivkin and then Kalmanovich of Provisions.

Abundantly supplied by Moscow with Russian rubles, which by inertia continued to ply as money, the new authority set about the recruitment of cadres of employees for governmental institutions in which Russian was the language used.

Since employment by government afforded the only opportunity of obtaining the means of subsistence, the population - both Jewish and in no lesser measure Polish, tried to use this opportunity widely.
I personally obtained work as assistant to the People's Commissar of provisions of Lithuania and, after its transformation into the Lithuanian-Belorussian Republic, as a secretary of the Department of Army Food Requisition, at the head of which stood a certain Khrisanfov, a semiliterate soldier of peasant birth. The task of our department was to extract the most possible food products from the countryside.

The new authority had not yet managed to get organized when our city unexpectedly became the arena of bloody encounters.
On the night of 18th to 19th of April, 1919, all the important strategic points, such as the railroad station, the Castle Hill dominating over the city and others, were seized without resistance by regular Polish troops who arrived with the cooperation of the local railroad workers by train from Warsaw, the capital of the newly independent Polish Republic. The Red Army, whose command displayed criminal negligence and scorned taking even minimal precautions, was taken unawares and had to abandon the city after two days of street battles, retreating across the Wilya River to the east, using the Green Bridge. The government of Mitskevich-Kapsyukas hurriedly left the city along with the Red Army.

In spite of the fact that Poles had also worked together with Jews in the Soviet institutions and that several of them, such as Olsky, Tsikhovsky, Kobak and others occupied the most responsible posts as communists, the newly arrived Polish soldiers massacred the peaceful Jewish population with the excuse that the Red Power was the Jew's exclusive creation.

Having lived under the power of the Russian Czars the Jews of the city of Wilno had not been subjected to a single pogrom in the course of 120 years. But the Jews had to suffer a pogrom, sustaining a large loss in murdered victims on the very first day after the occupation of the city by the Polish regular troops.
Accusing each Jew of communism, the so-called Polish Legionaires, with the full connivance of their command and without punishment, began to kill, arrest and mock (to cut beards and the like) the peaceful Jewish inhabitants. Like every Jewish family, ours too had to undergo harrowing experiences in those days.
Desperate appeals for help were heard all around, a Jew executed by the Poles lay under our window.

To our good fortune Polish legionaires did not burst into our apartment.
I do not have exact data about the number of Jews who perished in Wilno and its environs upon the entrance of the Poles.
I remember that the "poor" quarters were the ones which suffered most grievously, that among the murdered was the famous Jewish writer Weiter, that just in the suburb of Lipuvok, Legionaires drove out eighteen Jews and shot them all; approximately the same number was brutally killed by them in the country place Niemenchyn, where among the victims were the Tsynmans, the father and brother of my future wife's sister-in-law, whom the legionnaires ordered buried while they still showed signs of life.
The Poles drove many hundreds of Jews, arrested on a charge of belonging to the Communist party (among them was also my mother's cousin, the rich

timber merchant Samuel Shenyuk), to the city of Grodno, where the headquarters of the Polish army occupying the city of Wilno was located.

For the first time the Jewish population encountered the deep hatred not only among the Polish bourgoisie, but also among Polish peasants, especially those from the Posnan area.

I did not encounter this hatred for Jews in the Byelorussian peasants, Orthodox as well as Catholic, with whom I had come into close contact working in the timber industry. This fact was confirmed by their attitude towards the Jews during the Hitlerite occupation.

The bloody events could not help but arouse in me, a Jew, ill feelings towards Poles and their culture. I remember that in connection with this sentiment, I had no desire to study the Polish language, which I did not know, or to continue my juridical education at the Wilno university of Stephen Batory which the Poles opened right after the occupation by them of the city.

As a result of the defeat of Germany on the western Front in November, 1918, Poland also arose from the dead as an independent republic.

As we know from history, Slavic Poland managed to avoid the sorrowful lot of its fellow-Slavs who had fallen under a Tartar Yoke in the east and under a Turkish Yoke in the southwest.

Poland saw its best days in the 14th through 17th centuries as the most powerful Slavic government in Europe.

At that time, after the marriage of Lithuanian Grand Duke Jagello to the Polish queen Jadwiga, Poland's possessions stretched from the Baltic to the Black sea;

in 1410, under the leadership of a Polish king, the united Slavic and Lithuanian troops managed to gain a victory at Gruenwald over the Teutonic Order and to halt the movement of Germans to the East:

Under king Stephen Batory, the boundaries of Poland stretched to Pskov and Smolensk in the east;

at the turn of the 16th/17th centuries the Polish generals [2] seized Moscow and Poland's protegees (the False Dimitris) sat on the throne of the Russian Czars;

at the end of the 17th century, the Polish king John Sobiesky smashed the troops of the Ottoman Empire and liberated Vienna.

The decline of Poland's might began as early as the second half of the 17th century when the Ukraine, then under her power, revolted and joined with Russia in 1654.

The international position of Poland quickly began to worsen in the 18th century with the rapid growth of the might of its neighbors Russia in the east and Prussia in the west; in 1795, after the so-called Third Partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia and Austria, it ceased to exist as an independent country.

In addition to an unfavorable geo-political position, its Constitution strongly contributed to Poland's downfall. A republic with an elected king, its Constitution allowed the great Polish feudatories - "magnates" [3] enormous powers; they competed among themselves, often pursuing their personal interests to the harm of their homeland and paralyzing the taking of measures neccessary for self-defence (the Liberum Veto).

After its partition, Poland existed a short time as a semi-independent government - a satellite of Napoleon who cut out the "Duchy of Warsaw" from the part under Prussia.

After the fall of Napoleon, however, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, with its large Jewish population was annexed to Russia by a resolution of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 having preserved a partial autonomy.

The so-called "Congress Poland" was deprived of this autonomy after two uprisings - in 1830 and in 1863 and it was an inseparable part of the Russian Empire, the "Privislinsky Territory", during the following fifty years until the First World War.

---

[2] Khodkevich, Zholkievsky, and Lisovsky

[3] Poniatowski, Lubomirsky, Zamoyski, Radziwill, Leshchinsky, Pototsky and others

These historical facts explain why pan-Slavic ideas, which were popular among other Slavic peoples, especially among Serbs and Czechs who looked upon Russia as an older brother-protector, were lacking in Poland.

But for less understandable reasons even an elementary Slavic solidarity, neccessary in order to halt the rapid process of Germanization of Slavic peoples - a process from which Poles had suffered more than other Slavs - was also lacking in Poland.

By the beginning of the First World War, which the Serbian Premier Pasich, in a conversation with Czar Nicholas, characterized as a forthcoming mortal combat between Slavs and Germans, the spirit of Gruenwald had already completely disappeared in Poland.

Of this bears witness the fact that the Polish Legions organized by Joseph Pilsudski fought hand in hand with the eternal mortal enemies and oppressors of Slavdom.

Joseph Pilsudski, a son of an impecunious Polish nobleman, was born in 1867 in the village of Zhulovo, near the city of Wilno.

A romantic with adventurist inclinations, he was exiled to Siberia by the Czarist government for revolutionary activity as a member of the Polish Socialist party. In 1905 he took part in a robbery of a railroad mail car at the station of Bezdany near the city of Wilno.

Joseph Pilsudski belonged to those favored by fortune who win at horse races even when they stake a horse which did not win. Independent Poland, restored to life by the victory of the Western Powers, declared Pilsudski, (who had fought on the side of the Central Powers whose victory would undoubtedly have extended the sojourn of the German General-Governor, general Bezeler in Warsaw and thus would have prolonged Polish bondage for many years), the saviour of the fatherland and entrusted the reins of government to him.

Despite the fact that Germanization of its population made much greater headway than Russification in partitioned Poland, the venomous hatred of the Poles, especially of their gentry, was directed against Russia, which in a cultural respect was less of a menace to culturally more advanced Poland.

Typical character traits of the Polish gentry - megalomania and Russophobia, particularly the latter, took on pathological dimensions in Pilsudski, then head of the newborn Poland, imposing an imprint on her foreign policy. It is in Russophobia, along with megalomania, that we find the valid explanation for Poland's military adventures on her eastern boundary (such as the march on Kiev and the like) and for the much later, suicidal help rendered by her to Germany during the "Munich Crisis", when Hitler destroyed the Versailles system which was vitally important for Poland.

It should be admitted that the "Legions" organized at the initiative of Pilsudski helped Poland create a regular army more swiftly than did the other nationalities who received a right to self-determination and independence upon the conclusion of the First World War.

Newborn Poland used this army with success, as is well known, in conquering by force of arms lands populated by Belorussians and Ukrainians and thus extending her political boundaries far beyond the ethnic ones.

Having seized the city of Wilno, the Poles took from the Lithuanians their historic capital, recognized as theirs by the Western Powers; the Lithuanians never reconciled themselves with this.

Simultaneously, having overcome the resistance of the not yet organized Ukrainians, the Poles took over the city of Lvov and the whole eastern part of Galicia, where the city population consisted partially of Poles.

Having occupied the city of Wilno without meeting resistance from Soviet Russia, then absorbed by civil war, the Poles moved further to the east and occupied the city of Minsk.

It should be noted here that by this the Poles moved far to the east from the western border of Poland established by the victorious powers, the so-called "Curzon line" which ran to the west of the city of Brest-Litovsk and ran further to the south along the Bug River.

The civil government introduced by the Poles in the districts conquered by them in the northeast, in the so-called "kresy", was headed by Commissioner

Bonch Osmolovsky. Using the local Polish town population, the gentry and mainly the church, it set about the polonization of the local non-Polish, predominantly Byelorussian population.
Their Polonizing work was favored by the circumstance that their target was a semi- or wholly illiterate population in whom self-awareness as well as personal cultural inheritance was lacking and who were united to the Poles by a common Catholic religion.

In this "Polonization" the large urban Jewish population of the "kresy", whose intelligentsia had attended the Czarist schools with Russian as the language of instruction, presented a more difficult target - to the great displeasure, often indignation, of the Poles. In addition, a significant Jewish popular cultural movement, entering into history under the name of "Yiddishism", arose in the city of Wilno after the departure of the Russians in September of 1915.

The epoch of the brilliant blooming of "Yiddishism", with its Mecca, the city of Wilno, belongs to the period between the two World Wars. Being pimarily a popular movement, "Yiddishism" had to share under Hitlerism the tragic destiny of the eastern European Jewry from whose womb it came and which gave it birth.

In this epoch after the first World War two movements of cultural - political character, Yiddishism and Zionism vied for the allegiance of the Jewish masses. Both movements maintained their schools - the first with Yiddish, the other with ancient Hebrew as the language of instruction. But the movements diverged not only on the question of language.

The center of gravity of their divergence lay in their world views, their evaluation of the Jewry's recent past, of the expectations for the near future and of the measures neccessary for confronting both.

The Zionists were of the opinion that the solution for the problems confronting the Jewish people lay in the departure from the Diaspora, where the Jews were doomed to remain a minority among a hostile majority; in forgetting the cultural inheritance of the recent past, including language, as created in abnormal and painful conditions; in the restoration of a structurally healthy Jewish nation upon new principles, in its own independent state in ancient Zion, resurrecting the ancient language of its ancestors and their old traditions and customs.

The point of departure of the "Yiddishist" ideology was the so-called "Faith in Man". Educated on the romantic literature of the 19th century (and as yet in the absence of bitter experience) the Yiddishists believed that mankind had made progress not in the field of technology alone. The goal of Yiddishism was for the Jews to remain in their communities in the Diaspora and to obtain on one hand a genuine equality of rights and on the other to create their own native secular culture, autonomous from the enormous orhodox inheritance, in the present-day language of the masses - in Yiddish.

Yiddishism not only did not reject Yiddish as a product of abnormal and painful conditions of the Diaspora; on the contrary, it embraced and surrounded Yiddish with love, as an ailing and therefore doubly precious child, imaging in itself the thorny path and the sufferings of the Jewish people in the course of the last millenia.

Thus two world views - " To leave and forget" and "To remain and to remember" confronted each other, having crossed their ideological swords on the streets of Jewish Wilno.

It is neccessary to remark that the fact that at that time Zionism did not offer any practical resolution for pressing Jewish problems, (in the absence in

Palestine of the political prerequisites and material basis for a massive Jewish immigration) appeared as a circumstance facilitating the success of Yiddishism, with its goals of struggle for equal rights while remaining in place.

The need for the creation of his own own native culture for a Jew whom the primitivism of orthodox life did not satisfy was dictated at that time by yet another circumstance.

As is well known, the association of the Jews with the secular culture of the people among whom they lived, which in central Europe began with Moses Mendelssohn and in eastern Europe with the period of the "Haskala" was accompanied everywhere by the assimilation of the Jewish intelligentsia and the formation of a rift between the latter and the popular masses, and in many cases by its definitive departure from Jewry.

Moreover, in addition to the fact that the disappearance of Jewish isolation had not reduced antisemitism, the process of participation in an alien culture itself flowed far from smoothly and painlessly for the newcomers.

Neither Heine, Wasserman, Zweig, Emil Ludwig and others in Germany, nor Gershenzon, Eichenwald, Erenburg and others in Russia, nor Tuwim, Slonimski and others in Poland, nor Schnitzler, Werfel and others in Austria were met with open arms by the host peoples.

On the contrary, loud voices began to be heard ever more often in these countries, that the "newcomers", despite their "assimilation", remained alien and that their creative work had an corrupting influence on the cultural development of the host country. The enormous contribution of the Jews to the development of science , litrature and arts in these countries notwithstanding, already at the beginning of this century sentiments began to gain strength among the "hosts", which subsequently manifested themselves in the Hitlerite "auto da fe" in Germany and in the persecution of the so-called "cosmopolitans" in the Soviet Union under Stalin. Being tillers of "alien soil" aroused in the Jews feelings of inferiority typical for "unbidden guests".

In Vienna and Warsaw as well as in Berlin, less so in St.Petersburg, the assimilated Jews feelings of inferiority provoked a mass of conversions and, (among those who did not choose to break their ties with Judaism definitively) often a wish to conceal their belonging to the people who gave the world Moses, Christ and Marx, i.e. individuals who have exerted the greatest influence on the history of our era.

These facts demonstrated that, while remaining in the Diaspora, in order to avoid the above mentioned lamentable results of assimilation to alien cultures, it was neccessary to give the Jewish intelligentsia an opportunity to express themselves in their own, native secular culture and dedicate to it their strengths and talents.

The Chernovitskaya Conference which took place in 1908 gave a great stimulus to Yiddishism; in the period between the two World Wars enormous creative work was accomplished, (especially in the city of Wilno) in the matter of creation of a secular culture in Yiddish.

Yiddish itself, which previously was contemptuously called a "jargon" (a hodge podge of various languages) was purged of unnecessary admixtures and given a grammar. It was necessary to open a seminary for the preparation of cadres of teachers for the newly organized network of elementary and secondary schools with Yiddish as their language of instruction.

During the German occupation of W.W. I an Art Theater was organized - "The Wilno Troop" (later well known in the Jewish world), with a serious repertoire consisting of the works of the best Yiddish playwrites - Sholem Ash, A-nsky (Der Dibbuk), Gordin, Hirshbein and others, directed by Mazo and with the actors Abram Morewski, Azro and the actress Alomis in the main roles.

Besides the Yiddish newspapers - "Die Zeit" and "Ovent Kurier "the daily periodical press of Wilno was enriched in this period by a serious newspaper - the official organ of the Yiddishist movement, "Der Tog", under the editorship of Zalman Reizin. In this newspaper not only local, but also events and problems of Jewish life of a national character found reflection and illumination from the point of view of the "Bund" and the "Populists" - political parties serving as a bulwark of Yiddishism.

It should be mentioned that by this time there already existed a rich literature in the Yiddish language. In addition to the works of the above mentioned talented playwrites, the works of the writers Mendel Mokher Sforim, Perets and Sholom Aleichem who, in short stories full of subtle humor - "laughter through tears", commemorated the Jewish small town in Russia (the shtetl) and its inhabitants. "Tevye der Milkhiker" (forty years later in the U.S. the basis of "Fiddler on the Roof) enjoyed great popularity.

To the time between the two World Wars belongs the period of the blossoming of Yiddish literature, with the appearance of the works of a number of writers, headed by Opatoshu, I.I.Zinger and Zalman Shnevr.

I remember that I.I.Zinger's work "Joshe Kalb", in which he describes the daily round of life at the "court" of a Hasidic "tzadik" in vivid colors, with a talent not yielding to that of the Frenchman Emile Zola, made a deep impression upon me; (a presentation of the dramatized "Joshe Kalb" toured around the entire Jewish world under the direction and starring the American Jewish actor Morris Schwartz).

The literary activity of the young writers and poets united by the literary club "Young Wilno" (Moshe Kulbak, Chaim Grade, Abram Sutskever, Leiser Wolf and others) belongs to this period in Wilno.

An event of enormous importance in the matter of creation of a Jewish secular culture was the opening of the Jewish Scientific Institute (IWO) in Wilno in 1925, with the following departments:

of historiography with Dubnov, Cherikover and Shatsky;
of philology and literature with Max Weinreich, Noah Prilutski and Niger;
of economics and statistics with Yakov Leshchinski and Moyshe Shalitv;
of education with Lehrer and Golomb at the head.

In this Institute, with which the Jewish scholars of the whole world collaborated, all the material relating to the Jewish life in the Diaspora was gathered and received a scientific interpretation.

It should be noted that with the creation of a scientific center whose sole pursuit was the guardianship of the Jewish secular cultural inheritance, still another attempt was made to convince the world and in the first place the Jews themselves, that the Jewish people represented not only a religion, but a nation.

In this period the Yiddishist movement enveloped the entire Jewish world, especially the countries with massively concentrated Jews, but Yiddishism enjoyed especially great success in the city of Wilno - one of the few large cities where a Jewish intellectual, dissatisfied with the life of the orthodox ghetto, had the opportunity to satisfy his intellectual aspirations without tearing himself away from the Jewish masses and assimilating to the secular culture of other peoples .

It was only in Wilno that he had, in his native language: a good secular school for children, a reputable press, an art theatre with a serious repertoire, a rich library (Strashuna) and an opportunity of working scientifically.

The opportunity to avoid the role of an "unbidden guest" reflected itself in the mentality of the Jewish intellectual in Wilno who, in distinction from his fellows in Warsaw, Vienna and Berlin preserved the sense of his own dignity and did not bear a psychological "mark of shame"- the "yellow patch".

Thus, when in the period between the two world wars the baptism of "assimilated" Jews continued to bear a mass character in the capitals of Western Europe, especially in Vienna, I can not recall even one such occurrence in Wilno.

As we know, the optimistic prognosis of Yiddishism concerning the possible cohabitation of a Jewish minority with a Gentile majority founded on the so-called "faith in Man", turned out to be false and Yiddishism had to share the fate of the Eastern European Jewish communities from whose wombs it sprang.

Evaluating the role of Yiddishism in the tragic events for Jewry under HItlerism, it should be said that in the absence then of the political and economic prerequisites for a mass migration of Jews to Palestine, the political conception of Yiddishism with its slogan "to remain" did not in fact augment Nazism's fatal consequences for the Jewish people. Justice demands that it should be noted that, concerning the lamentably small emigration of Jews from Easterm Europe to Palestine in the period between the wars, the blame lay not in the Yiddishism's political conceptions but mainly in the immigration policy of Great Britain, to which the League of Nations had entrusted a mandate for Palestine. In the name of justice it should be admitted that in the historical stage between the Russian revolution of 1905, when the walls of the orthodox ghetto crumbled and the foundation of independant state of Israel, in 1948, Yiddishism along with Zionism were the ideas which supported self-awareness in the Jewish people.

Returning to events around us and to our family chronicle, it should be noted that with the establishment of the Polish authority, the right to private property as well as other capitalist economic principles and procedures were automatically restored.

One should also say that our family was in a difficult financial situation. My father's assets, besides a house which brought no income, consisted partly of cash which had been exhausted by us during our time as refugees and partially of advance money paid clients for lumber.

These claims - promissory notes were made out in Russian rubles, completely depreciated by that time - were worth little, even when the debtors were at hand.

Since it was impossible to resume the old profitable commission business, it was necessary to reorganize and switch to the exploitation of timber on our own account.

The circumstance that father already happened to own 100 desyatins (270 acres) of timber gave a stimulus to this idea.

Prior to our departure from Wilno, one of father's clients, the timber merchant Kizber from Novosventyany, signed over to father's name a 100 desyatins of timber to be felled [4] in lieu of the 50,000 rubles he owed father.

Since the logging permit had already expired due to the war, we had to spend several months soliciting the Polish authorities who finally extended the logging permit for one year.

The forest itself was located near the small town of Koltynyany and extended around the lake from which flowed the floatable Zhemyana river, a tributary of the river Wilya.

The town of Koltynyany was located within ten kilometers of the Novo-Sventyanski junction of the main Petrograd-Wilno line, with which a narrow-gauge railroad joined it.

The population of the little town consisted of about sixty Jewish families who made a living partially as proprietors of small commercial enterprises or handicraftsmen serving the needs of the surrounding peasants, partially as employees or contractors of the local timber industry.

---

[4] bought by him from colonel Mordvinov, the owner of the estate Koltinyany,

Since, after the deep shocks we sustained, the conditions of our life settled down to normal only very slowly, we could set about the exploitation of the timber only in the beginning of 1920; the management of this my father entrusted to me.

In connection with this work I had to live in Koltynyany for months; there I had the opportunity of acquainting myself more closely with the life of the small-town Jews (two of whom worked for me as stewards) and of the Lithuanian peasants, who worked in the cutting, carting out and floating of timber.

I remember that what astounded me particularly were the neighborly relations, based on respect and trust, which existed between the local peasants and the small-town Jews.

Each Sunday peasants from the surrounding villages - Shokalishki and Ashkintsy - would come to the little town to consult with the Jews about their problems, such as whether to replace his horse, to buy a cow and the like.

I could not believe my ears when I heard, twenty years later, that those same peasants from Shokalishki and Ashkenty had, in June of 1941, brutally killed to the last one all the Jews in the little town of Koltynyanyiny on their own initiative, as soon as their locality was occupied by the Germans, .

I personally got to acquaint myself still earlier with the wolfish instincts of these peasants, hidden under sheep's clothing.

I had supposedly good relations with the peasants, whom I gave the opportunity to earn money in the course of idle winter months; nevertheless, during my absence, as soon as it got dry in the middle of May, peasants from the village of Shokalishki (as I was later told), set fire to our timber - thus the cut logs which we had not managed to cart off were burned up. Although the cut timber was insured against fire, we still incurred great losses since, due to political events, we received compensation for the losses only in November 1920 in Polish marks, by then already strongly depreciated.

Describing the happenings in our family in 1919, I should mention that my sister Emma returned home with her husband, son Gera and baby-daughter Eva, prior to the occupation of our city by the Poles; in Gomel they had to live through an uprising against the Soviet authority led by a certain Strekopytov. Late in the fall of 1919, my older brother Yefim got married to a beautiful girl, Fanya Shabsels. Fanya bore my brother a daughter Dora in October, 1920, a son Lazar (Lasya) in 1923 and a daughter Lilya in 1927.

Regarding world events, first of all it should be observed that a peace treaty (without the participation of Russia) was signed on June 28th, 1919, in the city of Versailles by which a new order was established in Europe.

The conditions of the treaty, which the victorious powers dictated to the defeated at the Versailles Peace Conference, reflected a combination of the aspirations of the idealist United States President Woodrow Wilson to establish peace on principles of justice and the right of even the weak peoples to self-determination, unheard of in Europe previously, with the demands of the representatives of his allies (Georges Clemanceau of France, David Lloyd George of England and Victor Orlando of Italy) who wished to establish peace on the old principle that only the stronger has rights.

The treaty proceeded from the established fact that the war was started with premeditation by the Central Powers; thus, according to the conditions of the treaty Germany not only lost all its colonies but also, to rehabilitate the districts of France and Belgium devastated by the war, had to pay so-called reparations, mainly in kind.

Germany had also to make significant territorial concessions: in the west they had to give back to France Alsace-Lorraine conquered in 1871 and to Belgium the regions of the cities of

Epen and Malmedy; in the east, in resurrected Poland's favor, the Poznan district with the cities of Poznan and Torun and subsequently, according to the result of a conducted plebiscite, part of Upper Silesia with the city of Katovitse; the so-called "corridor" uniting Poland to the Baltic sea and separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany was also cut out of West Prussia, thus the port city of Danzig, with its exclusively German population, was declared a free city under the administration of a commissioner of the newly created League of Nations.

Austro-Hungary, the Dual Monarchy on the Danube, stopped existing as such according to the peace treaties of "San Germain" and "Trianon", and the following changes occurred in Europe in connection with its disintegration:

To the newly created Poland went Galicia, its western part with the main city of Cracow and its eastern part with Lvov.

New Czechoslovakia, with its capital Prague, was formed from the provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Carpathian Rus.

Bosnia with Herzogovina, Slovenia, Croatia and a part of Adriatic littoral with the city of Fiume went to the formation (out of the two kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro) of Yugoslavia, with its capital Belgrade.

Rumania received Transylvania and Bukovina,

To Italy went the southern part of the Tyrol and another part of the Adriaric littoral with the city of Trieste.

Thus greatly amputated, Austria and Hungary had to continue their existance in the new Europe as separate countries.

In addition to the demilitarization of the Rhineland, which remained under occupation by the allies' troops as guarantee of fulfillment by the Germans of the conditions of the Versailles peace treaty, its other conditions stipulated that defeated Germany was deprived of the right to produce certain kinds of weaponry and to maintain an army numerically exceeding 100,000 men (die Reichswehr).

As I mentioned previously, the "League of Nations" was created by the victorious powers meeting at Versailles, mainly as an instrument for the maintenance of peace.

The League of Nations - the General Assembly, the Council and the Secretariat - assembled in Geneva, Switzerland.

The most important point of the League of Nations' charter was the obligation of its members not to resort to force and to submit all disputed questions to the Hague Tribunal for settlement.

The weakness of the League of Nations consisted of the fact that the organization had neither the mechanism nor the means to forcefully carry out its decisions or to defend a victim of aggression.

One can suppose that the fact that its most influential members, England and France, present-day lovers of peace and opponents of the "right of might", just yesterday were still creating enormous colonial empires using their superior strength... did not instill much authority into the voice of the League.

The administration of the provinces taken from Turkey, Palestine being one of them, and of the colonies taken from Germany was also assumed by the League of Nations.

It would not be superfluous to note here that Great Britain, who still earlier, on the 2nd of November 1917, had declared itself (according to the Declaration of Lord Balfour) in favor of the creation of a "homeland" for the Jewish people in Palestine, received a Mandate from the League of Nations for the administration of Palestine.

Despite the fact that the League of Nations was created on the initiative of President Woodrow Wilson, the United States did not join the League after the American Senate refused to ratify the Versailles peace treaty, whereas the League of Nations was one of the treaty's achievements. Russia and Germany, who had belonged to the so-called European Great Powers, were initially not included in the League of Nations.

The First World War, concluded with the Peace of Versailles, was one in which, in distinction from previous wars, not only armies but entire peoples fought, This was a prolonged and total war, which demanded from participants an utmost mobilization of moral as well as human and material resources, i.e. a readiness to bear the greatest sacrifices and a possession of the will for victory.

For Russia the First World War, as we know, ended still earlier in the disgrace of Brest-Litovsk, due to a deficiency of resources, mainly moral ones.

Upon the conclusion of the war the world slowly began to come to its senses after the bloody nightmare when, in the course of more than four years, millions went willingly to meet their deaths in a paroxysm of thirst for mutual destruction, pushed by some hard to explain forces.

The indescribable sufferings and devastation which trench warfare brought to absolutely all participants, aroused, especially in the victorious nations, pacifist sentiments and the slogan "Never Again".

These sentiments were reflected in the literature of that time in the works of Erich Maria Remarque - "All quiet on the Western Front" and of Heinrich Barbiss - "In the Fire" which enjoyed particular success.

In these novels all the dullness of so-called "trench warfare" is displayed in vivid detail; along with the suffering and physical deprivations of months in the trenches the complete futility which life brought the participants is depicted, the gloryless, unnoticed ruin, frequently quite unavailing, of thousands of young lives.

I would like to note here that modern total war not only took away from the participants the brilliantly illuminated arena with heralds and fanfares, in it also found its full realization the long-noted tendency of subordinating the interests of the individual to those of society personified by the state.

In its nakedness total war attested to the cruel fact that even in the so-called "democracies" the state, instead of serving the individual, completely enslaves him and converts him into a depersonalized grey unit.

Returning to the fate of my native city, a part of Poland then, the Versailles Peace treaty did not bring Wilno peace, as it did to other parts of Europe.

In May of 1920, Josef Pilsudski, dreaming of returning to Poland its old grandeur and glory moved his troops to the east and, not encountering resistance on the part of Russia, then still absorbed by civil war, occupied Kiev, the capital city of the Ukraine.

Soviet Russia, however, which by that time had already coped successfully with the remnants of the Volunteer Army commanded by gen. Baron Wrangel, forcing them to evacuate their last stronghold - the Crimean peninsula, soon had an opportunity to hurl two mounted armies against the Polish troops who had moved far to the east without securing their flanks.

General Tukhachevsky, a former officer of the Czarist army, having compelled the Poles to a rather precipitous retreat, moved like lightening to the west; Budenny's "First Cavalry" occupied the city of Lwow and the "Second Cavalry" commanded by general Gay occupied our city of Wilno on July 15th, 1920.

General Gay's Cavalry Army did not have the appearance of regular troops - this was an assemblage of variously armed and equipped, but apparently fearless and battle-hardened horsemen.

I was surprised to recognize in the political comissar of one of gen. Gay's divisions my former associate at the Petrograd University, Ilya (Ilka) Melamed, son of the Vitebsk rabbi and a composer of operettas.

Gay's main forces did not linger in the city and on the following day rushed ahead, as the fighters said "on Arshava" (misspelling of Warshava - Warsaw).

Thus our city found itself in the hands of the Reds again, after a fifteen-month interruption.

With them came the "Special Department" headed by comrade Medved, which immediately began to function. The chastizing hand of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was less indulgent this time to class enemies of the revolution than they had been the first time around.

Without the perpetration of any crime, just the belonging to the bourgois class was an unforgivable sin sufficient for savage retribution.

Numerous arrests began among Poles and Jews thought rich, followed by executions. My father, fearing arrest, left the house and went to hide at the house of mama's nephew in Antokol, one of the city's suburbs.

To be at less risk, I took the post of secretary of the Provincial Provisions Commission, the chairman of which was a certain Selitsky who came from Russia. The deputy chairman of this commission and also chairman of the Spoils-Registration Commission was a certain Shleyfer, with whom are connected memories of very difficult experiences for my family.

My sister Emma's husband, Aaron Moyseyevich Eysurovich, had begun his professional career as an employee of the largest technical office in Wilno, "Gushcha and Malinovsky".

When the proprietors, Poles, left the city at the approach of the Reds, they insisted that Aaron Moyseyevich take over the management of their enterprise, including the warehouses of technical materials.

As such, upon first contact with Comrade Shleyfer, the manager of military spoils, Aaron was arrested on order of the latter by the "Special Department" and imprisoned in the cells for political detainees in the building of the Wilno Land Bank, where he was imprisoned for a whole month.

The fact that every night they would take people out "with their things" for execution from that building, held our whole family, especially my sister Emma, under indescribable pressure and terror.

Emma would repeatedly go to entreat Shleyfer and since in line of the Provincial Provisions Commission he was my immediate superior, she had to pass through the office I worked in, in order to get to him and to return there in tears when he unyieldingly refused to return her husband and father of her children to her.

I have to admit that on these occasions the appearance of a woman hysterically sobbing and wringing her hands in despair on the couch of my office did not fully harmonize with the surrounding business athmosphere and my duties as a secretary of the Provisions Commission.

Everything ended well this time, however. When in the middle of August, 1920 the Red armies of Budenny from the south and of Gay from the east approached Warsaw, they were crushed in the battle of Radziminy (called "the miracle at the Vistula") by the concentrated Polish forces, commanded by general Weygand who was sent by France.

The retreating Red army handed our city, the historic Lithuanian capital, to Smetona's democratic Lithuania.

After taking the city over from the Bolsheviks, the Lithuanians immediately set free all political prisoners, among them Aaron Moyseyevich.

In expectation of the setting free of the arrestees, an enormous crowd of relatives dammed up the Georgievsky Prospect near the building of the Land Bank.

I recall the somewhat strange behavior of Aaron Moyseyevich at that time. When at last he appeared, with a pillow in his hands, and we all hurled ourselves toward him, instead of halting, he rushed off at a quick pace in the direction of his home, with us running after him, unsuccessfully entreating him to halt. At home, having calmed down somewhat, he told us of his terrible experiences. Since the prisoners were sentenced to death by the "Special Department" in their absence, the sequential victim only learned of his sorrowful fate when he was ordered to leave the cell (an enormous bank operations hall) where all the prisoners were kept, "with all his things", usually around midnight.

In connection with this the terror among the prisoners reached its height every night around midnight and thus each one of them, even those spared, was subjected to the cruel torture by fear.

Having been put, with the taking of control by the Lithuanians, under the third, even though again democratic authority in the course of a single month, we had to adapt to new conditions again.

Since there was an opportunity then to conclude the timber exploitation in Koltynyany, I immediately headed there in order to knock together floats and float to Wilno the lumber which survived the fire and was removed to the shore.

By the end of September I managed to knock together around a dozen floats which I set in motion down the Zheymyan river, a tributary of the Wilya river, in order thus to reach the city of Wilno.

I almost paid with my life for this attempt, however, since the transport was immediately detained by a Lithuanian military patrol which was about to give me short shrift on the spot as a "Polish partisan".

At the Lithuanian military headquarters where they conducted me at my urgent supplication, they explained to me that the city of Wilno was in Polish hands now and thus, attempting to float timber there I acted to the harm of Lithuania.

The following occurred during the time of my absence:

after the retreat of the Reds, the Poles immediately took over the district conceded by the Russians to the Lithuanians.

having renamed one of their regular divisions as "Lithuanian- Belorussian", asserting that it consisted exclusively of natives of the Wilno district, Polish troops headed by gen. Zheligovski occupied the city of Wilno and the surrounding district on September 20th, 1920, meeting no resistance on the part of the Lithuanians.

Many thousands of Jews, (mostly young men) abandoned the city of Wilno and went along with the retreating Lithuanians to Kovno and surroundings, fearing a repeated pogrom.

This time the Polish authorities saw to it that a pogrom against the Jews should not be repeated. They did make many arrests, however, with accusations of the most fantastic character raised against the arrested Jews.

Thus they arrested an elderly peaceful artisan who lived in our house as long as I can remember - the shoemaker Abram Arluk, accusing him of throwing bombs at the passing Polish troops.

General Zheligovski formed an officially autonomous Middle Lithuania from former Polish lands which were handed over to Lithuania by the Russians, giving it a civilian authority headed by Vitold Abramovich, an eminent Wilno lawyer.

Since Koltynyany continued to remain in Lithuanian hands and my sojourn there was useless, I returned to the city of Wilno by roundabout ways in the beginning of October.

I did not linger long in Wilno and left hurriedly for Warsaw for two reasons. The government of general Zheligovsky was drafting natives of Wilno of my age into the army, for the defence of the artificially created Middle Lithuania - a goal which inspired me not at all.

Besides that, my rapid departure for Warsaw was also dictated by the fact that the losses connected with the timber fire in Koltynyany had to be paid off in Warsaw in Polish marks which depreciated more with every day.

Upon the receipt of the passport without which it was impossible to move, however, I was immediately arrested by Polish counter-espionage - as a Jew I automatically was suspected of Communism; I was searched and placed in a cell for prisoners where I ran into our shoemaker Arluk. I was saved by the permission issued in my name by the old Polish authority for the floating of wood which the Poles found among my documents.

The whole Jewish population was suspected of communism by the Polish government during the Polish-Soviet war - this was demonstrated by the fact that Jewish students who according to the Polish constitution were supposed to be inducted to the army as officers, were instead interned by the Polish authorities in a camp especially created for this purpose in Yablonaya.

Since the railroad bridge accross the Niemen near Grodno had been blown up, I had to go to Warsaw by a roundabout way - through Lida and Sedltse.

I rented a room in Warsaw from a Jewish family on Mila street and, after having stayed there for about two months, socializing with Jewish students, I returned to Wilno.

The war of 1920 between Poland and Soviet Russia was concluded with the Riga Peace, by which extensive lands with an ethnically non-Polish population, lying far to the east of the "Curzon line" (already mentioned by me), went to Poland.

The Riga Peace normalized political relations between Poland and the Soviet Union for a relatively prolonged time and stabilized the borders between these two countries for nineteen years, i.e. until the beginning of the Second World War.

By this treaty were also created at last - two years later than in the rest of Europe - the prerequisites for a renewal of the economic initiative and activity indispensable for the healing of the deep wounds inflicted by the seven-year war.

Lithuania cleared of its troops the lands which were given to them by the Bolsheviks (Koltynyany too), but to the very end of its existance as an independent republic it did not reconcile itself with the loss of the city of Wilno, its historic capital and did not maintain any kind of relation with Poland, having converted its border with it into an impenetrable "Chinese Wall".

For our city Wilno these new geograhic and political conditions did not presage anything good for its economic developement.

Wilno lost its advantageous geographic position as a center lying at the intersection of routes between Eurasia and Western Europe, which stipulated its interlocal significance in commerce and facilitated its rapid growth in Czarist times.

In addition the close-by "dead" (closed) borders with Russia and Lithuania (which ran within a few tens of kilometers from the city), not only narrowed the markets for the local industry but also deprived it of raw materials necessary for production.

The latter circumstance affected in a particularly fatal way the fate of the numerous sawmills situated along the Wilya river which flourished in the Czarist times; they then received the logs necessary for sawing by water from forests situated in the Wilya river basin, the majority of which remained on the Soviet side after the peace of Riga. Thus this important for our city branch of industry was almost paralyzed in the period between the two World Wars, since the majority of its sawmills were doomed either to complete [5] or partial (Sheynyuk's) inactivity.

But though the annexation (after the carrying out of "democratic" formalities) of the city of Wilno and its surrounding districts to Poland worsened its economic perspectives, especially so for its sawmills, in no case could one say the same about the timber industry as a whole.

---

[5] those of Gordon, Morgenstern, Parnes, Kalvaryisky, Piromontsky, Stefanovsky and others

In the first place the part of Byelorussia which went to Poland according to the Riga peace treaty was rich in forests [6] Apart from the enormous significance of timber as fuel, (in the eastern part of Poland not only were private apartments, factories and public buildings heated by firewood, but logs also served in part as industrial fuel) as is well known, wood as raw material finds the widest and most varied use.

Thus in our parts pine was used as building material, for furniture, railroad ties and other purposes; fir - for the manufacture of cellulose and cardboard; aspen - for matches; alder and birch - for plywood; oak - for barrels, furniture, parquet floors and other purposes.

On the other hand, markets for timber outside of Poland and adjoining East Prussia opened up in countries of Western Europe relatively poor in timber, such as Germany, Belgium, England and others thanks to the cheap water transportation through the free port of Danzig, .

Adapting himself to the new conditions, my father went into partnership with Vladimir Grigorevich Isserlin, the uncle of "big" Kolya's wife for the export of wood materials from Poland such as boards and ties, but mainly fir for cellulose (so-called "papirholz")

In Wilno, before the war, the brothers Isserlin [7] owned a gramophone factory and a pharmaceutical good's wholesale business with branches in Kharkov and Odessa.

Vladimir G. was our neighbour in Sheynyuk's apartment house and was a member of our synagogue. His son Sema was our younger companion in our games in the courtyard. During the war the brothers earned millions of rubles in Russia, mainly through the German merchandise which they received from "big" Kolya who got struck in Copenhagen at the outbreak of the war. However, because of the Bolshevik revolution and the depreciation of the ruble, Vladimir G. (Mark died still in Russia) managed to bring only a small fraction of the original fortune to Poland.

Since the timber industry, for which the global business conditions were very favorable in connection with the need to rebuild what had been demolished, was a field completely unfamiliar to Vladimir G., he went into partnership with my father in order to initiate the export of wood materials from Poland.

In a short time father managed to organize a regular purchase and shipment of papirholz which headed for East Prussia and of materials destined (through Danzig) for England - pine boards sawed in standard dimensions [8] Vladimir Grigorevich financed all these deals and took care of the sale of what was purchased.

Three large cellulose factories were located in East Prussia [9]. Acting through his brother-in-law, Yakov Yefimovich Tsyrinsky, then the largest timber merchant in Poland, V.G. Isserlin managed to be awarded a contract from the Tilsit Waldhof for the delivery of a large quantity of papirholz. Because of the stabilization of borders and interrelations between Poland and the Soviet Union after the Riga Peace of 1920 and also of good business conditions in world timber markets, there were good profits in common with Isserlin from the export business which flourished up to the fall in 1923/4 of prices for wood materials in world markets.

---

[6] in which of those of soft tree-stock - pine, spruce and aspen predominated, of those of hard wood - birch, oak and alder.

[7] Mark, "big" Kolya's father-in-law and Vladimir,

[8] in inches - three thick by nine and eleven wide, also two-and a-half thick by seven wide, as well as hewn in the forest double railroad ties (so-called sleepers), also of pine.

[9] Ashafenburg in the city of Memel, Waldhof in the city of Tilsit and Koholyt in the city of Koenigsberg.

In export as well as in the timber exploitation father was helped by all three of his sons. It should be noted that my brother David and I did this to the detriment of our unfinished educations - I in jurisprudence and David in medicine. My friend Alesha Perevozky made his way through Lithuania to Germany in the latter part of 1919 to continue there the study of medicine begun by him at one time.

Exporting, together with V.G. Isserlin, fir wood to East Prussia for the manufacture of cellulose and, to England, sawed pine and hewed railroad ties, the so-called "sleepers", through the port of Danzig, we also made money in the following timber exploitations:

under my guidance at the previously mentioned Koltynyany

of papirholz jointly with my brother Yefim near the "Yashuny" station of the Polesky railroad, on landowner Vitold Wagner's estates of "Gudelki" and Mechislav Myanovsky's "Malye Solechniki";

of pine timber, jointly with L. Sheynyuk, managed by my brother David in the park already described by me, on the estate of Verki near the city of Wilno, which once belonged to the Radzivill princes and after the war to the landowner Spinak.

This restored, even if not for long, the impaired by the war financial well-being of our family, though only partly so because of the losses caused by the constant depreciation of the Polish mark.

Apart from the short duration of the good business conditions for timber in the world markets, which continued only until the end of 1923, I want to point out here the two other important reasons which reduced almost to zero the initially large monetary successes of my father.

The first reason was the beforementioned rapid and unceasing depreciation of the Polish Mark (until the introduction of a new stabilized Polish monetary unit, the "Zloty", in 1923), from which my father, like the majority of the population, was not able to defend himself; as a result his relatively great earnings imperceptibly but constantly dwindled.

The second circumstance which was ruinously reflected in our financial well-being was the fact that father set about, as a partner-financier, to the building and exploitation of a large distillery which was located in the vicinity of the city of Wilno, on the estate "Chervony Dvor" belonging to the landowning Parchevsky brothers. For the restoration of the distillery, together with its rectification - the Germans had destroyed it, having removed all copper parts, the owners agreed to give the distillery in lease without payment for twelve years.

Our neighbor and member of our congregation, with whom my father met at the Saturday services which my father, fulfilling the responsibilities of an elder, attended punctually, persuaded my father to enter into this, completely unfamiliar field.

This Goldberg, who had worked all his life in this field as the proprietor of a beer bottlery and a carbonated water factory, assured my father that the distilling business was very profitable at that time.

The fact that the distilling business was flourishing then was confirmed by information from still other sources.

Unfortunately, when my father set about this business he did not know about one very important circumstance, namely that the flourishing of the distilling business was based on illicit activity - on cheating by the proprietors, (in collusion with government officials) of the extortionate government excise, which seven times exceeded the price of the product, i.e. of the alcoholic rectificate.

Since, when they started the distillery, my father positively refused to take part in an activity for which prison would threaten him, the distilled spirit, for which high tax was payed during distillation, had to be sold below cost of production, since there was much cheap, illegal alcohol on the market.

The critical situation was not helped by the opening of a vodka and liquers factory in the city of Wilno.

As a result, in 1924, long before the expiration of the favorable lease agreement with the Parchevskys, the distillery had to be liquidated, by which all the capital invested by my father was lost.

This unsuccessful business had especially tragic consequences for my brother David. Instead of continuing his medical education, the resposibility of rebuilding the distillery and then to manage it fell to his portion and he thus wasted four years.

In June of 1922, having decided to complete my juridical education, I went to Berlin with an intention to head from there to Prague - capital of the newly established Czechoslovak republic with Tomas Masaryk as president - where at that time existed a Russian language juridical department, with a pre-war program of instruction, with the famous professors [10] at the head.

Before my departure, my sister Anya married Alexander Abramovich Mints, a resident of the city of Belostok, native of Odessa.

Sasha Mints' sister Esfir, a brilliant beauty in her time, was the wife of Boris Nemirovsky, before the war a very wealthy man.

When gen. Sukhomilov (subsequently as War Minister accused and convicted of Russia's unpreparedness for the war) was commander of the troops of the Kiev military region, Nemirovsky made a lot of money under him on contracts and supplies.

Several years prior to the First World War, Nemirovsky came to Belostok with a million rubles and bought a large textile factory, Zlatoriya, located in the city's environs and entrusted the management of the factory to his brother-in-law Sasha Mints.

Since after the war the factory was not operative due to serious damages inflicted by the military operations, Sasha did not have fixed employment at the time of his marriage. He intended to use the dowry which Anya received from our father to begin trading in textiles.

Although the mere fact that this was a marriage by matchmaking offended the self-esteem of our proud Anya, she agreed to it, being already past her prime.

Although Sasha possessed a pleasing appearance and turned out to be a devoted, loving husband and a good family man, our Anya did not find happiness in this marriage.

The main reason for this was the fact that Sasha did not impress Anya, who stood above him intellectually, neither with his mind, nor with his education, nor by the force of his character.

In addition, he did not give her the social standing which a good financial position brings with it, a standing to which Anya was accustomed while living with our parents. Sasha soon lost the dowry since, trying to save himself from the depreciating Polish mark he bought German marks and thus fell, as they say "out of the frying pan into the fire", since the German mark completely lost its value in the course of 1923.

As an insurance agent Sasha later earned barely enough for a very modest living and our Anya felt very keenly the lowering of her social standing connected with the difficult financial position.

In March of 1923 Anya bore a daughter - Rashel, whom we called Shelya. Still in the spring of 1922, i.e. right after the wedding, Anya and her husband

---

[10] Novogordtsev, Kizeveter and Zenkovsky

moved to Belostok, where they shared a big and beautifully appointed apartment in a new house on No. 40 Senkevicha street with the Nemerovskys.
However, in the spring of 1924 they had to return together with their daughter to our parents in Wilno because of utter financial ruin; I found them there when I returned home from Berlin in the fall of 1924.

Soon after my return to Wilno in December of 1818, I experienced my first great love.
She was nineteen years old when I met her and was called Zina.
A blond with big brown eyes, she astounded everyone by her superb beauty and her femininity.
Zina had an enthusiastic nature and lived exclusively by her feelings or rather her impulses.
The diary which she kept astounded me by the beauty of its style as well as by its content - her dream was to become a prostitute.
The daughter of Vasily Kostovsky, a Moscow jurist serving as a police officer, Zina ended up in Wilno as the wife of my former schoolmate (not of the same grade), the baptized Jew Mirman, from whom she was cut off when the Poles suddenly occupied Wilno in April, 1919, when Mirman was away on a mission.
Without any means of sustenance and no chance of making a living, she remained in her brother-in-laws' charge until he went to Russia without her when she became intimate with me and, having announced that she loved me, refused to accompany him there.

With the Jewish feelings of isolation and persecution exacerbated then by the pogrom, I could not take - a Gentile and another man's wife - to my parents' house.

It should be noted here that the economic life of the city was in complete decline at that time in connection with the occupations endured - a long one by the Germans and a short Bolshevik one and also with the pogrom against the Jews.
General economic revival was further made more difficult by the circumstance that the border with Russia to the east of the city as well as that to the northwest with Lithuania, which refused to be reconciled with the loss of its capital, were, so to speak, completely lifeless.

One had to reorient oneself facing west and even under normal circumstances this demanded more than a single month's time.
I rented a room for Zina on the main street of the city and, since there could be no question then of earning money, I mobilized all my limited financial means and, having exhausted the ready money, began to sell everything that represented some value, including, I remember, my gold watch and a massive, engraved, silver cigarette case.

In addition to all this Zina was very impractical, to put it mildly.
With the money obtained by me with such difficulty, she first of all bought flowers, saying that she could live without bread but not without flowers.
I recall how one of the crowd of students constantly surrounding her, a certain Bentsman, recognized as a cynic, present at such a scene, instructed her: "Zinochka, first gorge yourself like a pig, then you can smell the flowers."
But we both were young and, returning to that time, I recall that despite material deprivations, our "fairytale of dear love" abounded with enchanted moments which only two people loving one another can create.

But our happy romance lasted only a few months. It ended abruptly when I returned to her after a several-day absence in connection with a disagreement between us. Zina greeted me: "you did not leave me, I left you, for yesterday I betrayed you with Gorlin." "Zina, what did you do, I still love you truly!" I

shouted from pain, feeling that something irreparable had happened for which I could not forgive her, just because I loved her so strongly.
I felt the latter clearly when I left never to return, despite suffering and sleepless nights.

I did not return even after our meeting in a city park (Bernardinsky Garden), during which Zina assured me that she had driven Gorlin off right away and that she had not slept all the nights after my leaving.
We met as she requested in a letter flooded with tears and which, I remember, began with the words: "How pitiful, dear boy, that you are so proud and sef-esteeming; you see what the results are".
In those days I was not capable of all-forgiving love...
I also did not realize to what great torments I had doomed myself - I had to witness as Zina, left by me but still greatly dear and beloved, was greedily pounced on by men for her beauty.

Zina soon became the mistress of the head of a front-line mission of the Western Allies, the English Colonel Moket. Moket rented for her a room in the city's best hotel - the Bristol, surrounded her with luxury, showered her with gifts - clothes, furs and jewelry.
Since, unavoidable in a small city, I frequently encountered Zina, for the most part in an automobile along with Moket, and this was extremely painful for me, I accepted my father's proposal to go away to the forest.

At first I went to Madzyakol (Gen. Buturlin's estate of Buyvidishki), located in the neighborhood of Wilno, in order to check on the carting away of timber which my father had bought already cut and resold to the Municipal Electrical Station. In the absence of coal the Electrical Station used logs. The fuel situation was so critical that, in order not to leave the city in darkness, the furnaces of the station's incinerators gulped down all the uninhabited wooden houses, among them the enormous wooden building of our City Circus, towering above the Lukishki square.

At Medzyakol I lived in the midst of a big forest in the neglected hut of an old forester, in which his whole family huddled together.
They set aside for me the best sleeping spot - on a bench near a window, where there was more air seeping through.
The forester himself slept on the big oven.
In the mornings when we would go out, numerous tracks of wolves were seen all around in the snow, but during the day they did not show themselves.

Occupied with the measurment of wood on numerous departing peasant carts, requisitioned by the authorities, the days passed imperceptibly.
The evenings were the critical ones, when it already began to darken after three o'clock in the afternoon and it was necessary to light a little kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling - my thoughts returned then to my experiences.
I paced around the barely illuminated hut like a wild beast caught in a cage, provoking surprise in the members of the foresters' family who whispered "the young gentleman is sad!"

Having concluded our affairs in Medzyakol, I went to Koltynyany, already mentioned by me. There I took over from my brother Yefim who had not quite coped with the task of organizing the swift exploitation of a hundred desyatins of timber, urgent in connection with the nearing deadline of the cutting permit received from the Polish authorities.

Meanwhile, things did not go smoothly for Zina, since she coped poorly with the role of a "kept woman".

It was one thing to dream in a diary of becoming a woman for sale but, unexpectedly for her, it turned out to be much harder to live with a person who one does not love.

This turned out to be beyond her powers, even after she began to resort to cocaine.

When I came home from Koltynyany for the Passover holidays in the spring, they told me that Zina had dropped Moket and attempted to commit suicide by taking poison. After she was rescued, she expressed a desire to see me and for this reason her friend, a certain Maslova, was coming to our house to call me.

Soon afterwards Zina married a Polish merchant, Vatslav Novitsky and bore a daughter Eleanor, who she showed me when I visited her at her request before my departure for Berlin.

Zina lasted only one year. In the summer of 1923, in the twenty-third year of her life, she died of galloping consumption.

I visited her grave in the Lutheran cemetery in Wilno in October of that same year when I came home from Berlin for the holidays.

In the then emptied city, where everything was in sight, my tragic romance with Zina made me the subject of attention of the local proud beauties and already in the spring of 1920 I entered upon a romance with a married woman which continued for two whole years, right up to my departure for Germany.

I remember that being one corner of a triangle was initially not at all to my liking. But my repeated attempts to "break up" caused by my unease elicited resistance from my lady who, apparently not loving her husband, asserted that she too wished to have a little "sun".

At that time I was a member of a small circle which we jokingly nicknamed "the tragic menagerie".

It consisted of people who, like myself with my unfinished juridical education, were unsettled in one way or another by the Russian revolution and who, after having lived in the great capitals, found themselves in a remote province, as our city was then, cut off by a dead border from the sources of the Russian culture of which we all were a product.

In connection with the city's coming to be under the authority of Poland, it was necessary to adapt oneself to new conditions and to resolve a number of problems of an economic as well as cultural character.

Apart from adaptation to completely new economic conditions, we also had to deal with the fact that Polish language as well as culture were alien to us; moreover, the deep popular Polish anti-Semitism, which had taken a bloody form during the city's occupation by the Poles, little disposed us to the joining of their culture.

On the other hand, preservation by us of our old cultural allegiance, especially our Russian speech, provoked hostile reactions on the part of the Poles, who wanted to Polonize the lands conquered by them, the so-called "Eastern kresy" in the shortest of times.

The nucleus of the circle engendered in part by the conditions described by me, consisted, besides myself and my sister Anya, of: the engineer Michael Sergeyevich Gordon and his wife (Rivunia); the dentist Dora Moyseyevna Kats and, afterwards, her husband Vidor; Basya Shachnovich, afterwards - Brinker and Abràm Yulevich Efros and his wife Sharlota, in whose apartment we gathered.

We were often joined by David Lvovich Strugach, co-owner of a yeast factory in Oshmiany; Savely Weinbren, one of the city's golden youth; two guard officers - Elets and Shenshin and somewhat later Pol Koretsky, a relative of Clara Ezekiyelevna Sheynyuk.

Our gettings together usually began with the songs of Dora Moyseyevna, who possessed a pleasant voice as well as an enormous repertoire of romances and operatic arias, by Shunshin's improvisations on the piano, by the telling of jokes and ended with supper and the use of a large amount of vodka.

Sharlotte Efros, our hostess, was distinguished by her exceptional wit, which is illustrated by the following episode.

Once, when I decided to spend the night at the Efros, Sharlota, conducting me to my room, told me: "Munya" (thus my friends as well as everyone at home called me) "just don't make a mistake with the doors during the night. If you seek experience, then" pointing out the room where the eighty-five-year-old nurse slept, "go ahead through these doors. If you prefer youth, freshness, innocence then", pointing out the room where her sevety-five-year-old cook slept, "please, through these doors."

For the fact that the desire of us "people of the capitals" to alleviate the difficulty of our sojourn in a remote province, which our city had become, took the form of drinking bouts with the use of abun dant quantities of vodka, I personally paid with irregularities in my pulse and a heart weakness.

I took care of this with mineral baths at Neuham, then a world resort for heart ailments, where I went on the advice of the famous Berlin cardiologist Professor Goldssheider, immediately upon my arrival to Germany.

GERMANY

In defeated Germany, thoughts of retaliation
Reactionary lie that war was lost because of Jews and Marxists
The Nazi Hitler gang
Assassination of Walter Rathenau caused by Rapallo
Rapallo the first correct step in German politics
Rapallo's results excellent for Germany
My enrollment at the Commercial Institute in Berlin
My subjects and professors
Ricardo's quantitative theory of value of money
Berlin a world center of science and art
The terrible devaluation of the mark
Old traditions untouched, depersonalization by industrialization
I feel no antisemitism
Great Jewish input to the growth of German banking and industry
Jewish participation in German banks, light industry, department stores
Jewish contribution to science and literature
Moscow emigree theater
in Berlin, Russian circles
Broadening of my cultural horizons

The German republic, newly established after Wilhelm II Hohenzollern's abdication of the imperial throne, entered history under the name of "Weimar", with president Friedrich Ebert, a Social Democrat, at the head. Already in the first months of its existence it had to overcome several coup attempts, the first one on the part of Red Communists in Berlin and on the Ruhr, the so-called "Spartacus revolt".

These revolts were suppressed with the help of the reactionary-minded corps of war veterans, by whom the leaders of the revolt - Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxenburg, were brutally killed.

The same fate overtook the Communist Kurt Eisner, head of a Red republic created in Bavaria which was also liquidated with the help of the corps of veterans.

A coup attempt of the right which followed soon after, conducted with the help of those same veterans, the so-called "Kapp putsch", was liquidated by a general strike of workers declared by the government.

In defeated Germany, immediately upon the conclusion of the war, along with pacifism, ideas of retaliation (revanche) began to flourish in circles close to general Erich Ludendorf, Chief of the German General Staff during the war - even though it was known to no one better than to Ludendorf that it was not revolution which provoked Germany's defeat, but vice versa. Revolution flared up only after Ludendorf insisted that the German government halt the war by way of an armistice, paying any price in order to avert the utter rout of his armies which were already retreating for three months .

Playing on the fact that when the armistice was signed the German army was still on enemy soil, the "revanchists" began to cultivate a conviction in the German people that the war had been lost only because revolting Marxists and Jews had stabbed the victorious German army in the back; they began to propagate the legend of the "Dolchstosse" with success, particularly so in Bavaria.

In the person of Adolf Hitler, a native of Austria who served in the German army during the war, the German chauvinists found one not only like-minded, but also a fanatically purposeful organizer and an eloquent orator-demagogue, able to hypnotize a crowd by his speeches directed at the base instincts of the masses.

His fanatical, bestial anti-Semitism facilitated in great measure the dizzying success of Hitler, as did in no less measure the bordering on stupidity ignorance of his audiences who took on faith his reiterations that anything detrimental, including the thousand- year struggle between Teutons and Slavs and the centuries-long struggle for the Rhine, was caused by the all-powerful world Jewry.

In a short time Hitler, having greatly increased the number of the members of the insignificant "German Workers Party" which he had joined, and having added "National Socialist" to its title, converted it into a dominating political factor within Bavaria.

Hitler found the homosexual Ernst Rohm, organizer and commander of the Nazi fighting organizations already in the party. Soon he was joined by Alfred Rosenberg, a native of the Russian Baltic, a theoretician of racism with his studies of the "Master Race" and later father of the "Nuernberg laws" aiming at the preservation of the purity of the Aryan race.
A little later, Hitler was joined by the following persons who would play an important role in the Nazi movement:
Herman Goering, celebrated during the last war as a pilot and commander of the Richthoven Escadrille, bringing the party financially important contacts with the German large bourgeoisie;
Rudolph Hess, an idealist, an enthusiastic and blind follower of Hitler;
Julius Streicher, a filthy debauchee and zoological anti-Semite, publisher of the pogromist paper "Der Stuermer" in Nuerenberg;
the brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser, anti-capitalist-minded National Socialists.

I have enumerated here the main collaborators who accompanied Hitler in his first steps on the road to stagger the world by bloody upheavals, unheard of in the annals of history by their dimensions as well as by the monstruosity of their cruelty and to cover the German people with infamy, the washing off of which will take more than one century.

I went to Berlin at the end of June, 1922, right after the killing of Walter Rathenau, the Jewish Minister of Foreign Affairs in the cabinet of Chancellor Wirt of the "Weimar" republic, by members of a German revanchist fighting organization, the so-called "Erhard Brigade".
Walter Rathenau was the son of the engineer Emil Rathenau, the founder in Germany of A.E.G. (Allgemeine Elektrizitet Geselshaft), one of the largest electrotechnical industrial enterprises on the European continent.

In spite of his enormous merits as an organizer of the German war materiel industry during the First World War, Walther Rathenau, by an irony of fate, aroused the hatred of reactionary-minded circles in Germany and consequently was killed for the fact that he signed a treaty proclaiming a rapprochement between Germany and Russia with Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, with whom he met in Rapallo, on the Italian seashore - the first correct step in German foreign policy in post-Bismarckian Germany, after a number of fatal mistakes.

Having at its disposal:

a people whose distinguishing traits were an exceptional feeling of duty and a readiness to make great sacrifices on the altar of the fatherland, as well as discipline and unquestioning obedience;

a well-disciplined, excellently armed army, led by a command which, as the last wars showed, had fully mastered the military art like no one else;

a mighty industry which was able to satisfy the demands of modern conflict in which possession of superior technical means was one of the decisive factors stipulating victory;

Imperial Germany thus possessed the necessary means for its establishing by force of a dominating position on the European continent.

But if defeat came instead of the deserved victory, Germany owed this first of all to its rash acts of a foreign policy character and their fatal consequences.

Before the war one such act was undoubtedly the proclamation by Germany of a large military shipbuilding program and the Kaiser's simultaneous announcement that "the future of Germany lies on the seas," by which Germany pushed Great Britain, who saw a serious danger for its oceanic colonial empire in a large German military fleet, into the ranks of the anti-German coalition.

During the war Germany, as is well known, by its proclamation of "unlimited submarine warfare" provoked war with the United States, whose enormous material and human resources played a decisive role in the last critical phase of the war.

But in an analysis of the reasons which led to the hard peace conditions dictated to Germany at Versailles, it is also impossible to disregard a fact which the war has clearly demonstrated, namely that a war on two fronts was by itself a task beyond Germany's strength. The lessons of the war dictated to Germany the indispensability of avoiding a war on two fronts in the future.

It should not be forgotten that right up till the Second World War, a firm opinion prevailed among the so-called European great powers (and Germany was no exception) that the creation of extensive colonial empires was a guarantee of the well-being of the so-called mother countries; of this testifies the Italian venture in Abyssinia in the late thirties.

Proceeding from these considerations, Rathenau decided that the enemy No. 1, i.e. the country whose interests were irrecocilable with those of Germany, who was seeking the restoration of its, if not dominating, then at least its former position in Europe, was Great Britain, jealously guarding its dominating position on the seas, and in addition still holding true to its traditional policy of "a balance of power".

The fact that Germany as well as England were highly industrialized and needed foreign markets, intensified still further the irreconcilability of these two countries' interests.

Moreover, sober evaluation of the situation created by the peace of Versailles indicated a community of interests between continental Russia and Germany. To Germany as well as Russia the war brought defeat, large territorial losses and borders with which it was hard for Germany, split by the so-called "Polish corridor", as well as Russia, hurled back to the boundaries of "pre-Petrine Rus", to reconcile themselves.

In an economic respect both these countries complemented each other before the war. For industrial Germany the predominantly agricultural Russia constituted an enormous market for the sale of its industrial products. For its part Germany bought in Russia agrarian products and raw materials needed by it - such as wood, high-quality ore, furs and others.

But the treaty signed by Walter Rathenau at Rapallo, which proclaimed a Russo-German rapprochement, was not needed for considerations of distant future alone.

"Rapallo" turned out to be a correct tactical step in German foreign policy which immediately brought defeated Germany important favorable results.

First of all, Rapallo gave the commander of the German Reichswehr, gen. Seekt, the opportunity to train his soldiers in the use of the newest type of weaponry, which the Versailles Treaty had forbidden Germany to have, on the territory of the Soviet Union.

But the main favorable for defeated Germany consequences of "Rapallo" lay in the field of improvement of its international position.

The "Victors" perceived, not without foundation, a threat to the order in Europe, established strongly in their favor by "Versailles", in the process begun in Rapallo of rapprochment between Germany, possessor of a mighty industry and famed for its organization, and Russia, with its enormous human reserves and riches in raw materials. In order to stop this dangerous process, France repudiated the policy of a "hard hand" carried out by its premier Raymond Poincare.

In the beginning of 1923 Poincare had occupied the Ruhr basin - a concentration of German heavy industry -in answer to the insufficient fulfillment by the Germans of the reparations imposed on them by "Verailles", by which economic chaos and galloping depreciation of its monetary unit (the mark) was provoked in Germany.

Holding in his hands the "Russian card" given him by his predecessor, Walter Rathenau, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Weimar republic, Gustave Streseman, achieved a change of the policy of unilateral dictation, the demand of unquestioning execution and, as we saw, of repression which was embodied by Poincare - to a policy which I would characterize as a policy of bilateral agreement and conciliation headed by the French Premier Aristide Briand.

In accordance with the new spirit reigning in the Franco-German interrelations, after an evaluation by the American Dawes to determine Germany's ability to pay and to coordinate with it the "reparations" which Germany had to pay, the following ensued:

an international loan, with the strong participation of the United States (Young) by which Germany received 800 million marks to put its finances into good order and to strengthen the new German monetary unit - rentenmarks - introduced by the director of the Reichsbank, Heilmar Shacht;

a treaty between Germany and the victorious powers, concluded in 1925 in the Swiss locality of Locarno, which obligated the participants to the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, later supplemented by a treaty entering history under the name of "Kellogg pact" the name of the participating American statesman;

the acceptance of the German Weimar Republic into the number of the members of the League of Nations;

early evacuation of the Allied troops from the Rhineland, occupied by the latter to secure fulfillment by Germany of the obligations assumed by them at "Versaillees".

As we see, the threat of a German-Russian rapprochement proclaimed at Rapallo forced the "victors" to alleviate rapidly certain consequences for Germany of their defeat (not including her territorial losses), embodied in the hard conditions of "Versailles".

By an irony of fate, however, the antiSemitic-chauvinist circles in Germany, as I already mentioned, regarded "Rapallo" as an act of treason and killed its initiator, the Jew Walter Rathenau.

In accordance with this, the first step in foreign policy of their leader Adolf Hitler when he came to power in 1933 was the nullification of the treaty with Russia signed at Rapallo.

By this act Hitler - since his simultaneous efforts to convert England, then the natural and main adversary of Germany into a friend (he sent there his minister Ribbentrop) ended in complete failure, as could be expected - doomed Germany to a war on two fronts and by this sealed the fate of her second attempt at domination of Europe.

I have dwelled somewhat at length on the fate of the treaty signed at Rapallo in order to refute with facts the accusation of the antiSemitic-reactionary circles, who professed upon conclusion of the unsuccessful war (and as we know were supported by a majority of the German people), that the Jews were the reason and source of all their misfortunes.

As a matter of fact, "Rapallo" reveals to us that after Bismarck it was none other than the Jew Walter Rathenau who first gave the right direction to German foreign policy, which was leading beforehand to catastrophe; "Rapallo" led Germany out of isolation as well as out of the desperate situation into which defeat had plunged her.

The history of "Rapallo" also reveals to us that it is precisely owing to the chauvinist circles who were unable, when they came to power, to distinguish a natural enemy from a possible friend - since their brains were stupefied by antiSemitism, that the eighty-million strong German people did not occupy the position in Europe which belonged to them by right.

Upon my arrival in Berlin I immediately sought out there my friend Alesha who, as mentioned previously, in 1919, soon after the Poles occupied the city of Wilno made his way through Lithuania to Germany to continue the study of medicine begun by him in Russia.

Alesha, as well as his fiancee - Rashel Epstein, a native of Wilno who he married soon after, advised me against going to Prague to study the old Russian law which was entirely useless by that time.

Since it was impossible not to agree with their arguments, I decided to abandon the thought of Prague and to try to enter the Commercial Institute in Berlin, famed as the best in Europe, in the hope that I would be able to apply in practice the theoretical knowledge acquired by me there while working in the timber industry, where I had worked for the last three years and which was flourishing when I left Wilno.

To implement this decision I began to apply for admission to the Commercial Institute immediately upon my return from Nauheim.

My entrance into a German institution of higher learning was complicated by the fact that my documents, such as my secondary school diploma and others, remained at the Petrograd University and my exambook, the so-called "matrikul", at the Kiev University.

I had on hand only a leave-of-absence certificate from the Petrograd University which moreover had long since expired.

When I turned to the Soviet Representation in Berlin with a request to help me obtain my documents from Petrograd, they demanded of me that I furnish them evidence that I had not served in the White Army.

My objection that theoretically it was possible to receive an attestation that I had served in the White Army, but no one could attest that I had not served there was of no avail.

A member of the German Reichstag (parliament), the famous Socialist-Revisionist Eduard Bernstein helped me; at my request he asserted before the Rector of the Commercial Institute that I possessed a secondary school diploma.

The school year had already begun when they admitted me to the Berlin Commercial Institute, which was located in the building of the Berlin exchange and Chamber of Commerce at number 3 Spandauer Street.

The Institute was supported by the means of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce, the chairman of which was Franz Von Mendelsohn, a descendant of Moses Mendelsohn, the initiator of the assimilation of German Jews to secular culture, himself already a Christian for several generations. Professor Niklish was the Rector of the Institute in my time.

I chose the study of National Economy and Private Economy (enterprise) as my two main subjects and Law and Insurance as my two additional subjects. Professors [11] and others read to us on national economy.

Werner Zombart was a scholar of world fame as a historian of capitalism. The majority of the above mentioned professors lectured simultaneously at the Berlin University.

Professors Niklish, Leitner and others lectured to us on private enterprise. Besides commercial arithmetic, bookkeeping and psychotechnics (adverising), the latter study also encompassed banks, the exchange and transactions on the exchange.

---

[11] Professors Bonn, Oilenburg, De Prion, Von Barkevich, Werner Zombart, Schumacher

The Jew Georg Bernhardt, himself a fascinating personality of whom I wish to say a few words, lectured to us on the latter subject.

An ordinary journalist to begin with, without an academic education, Georg Bernhardt achieved a high position during the Weimar Republic thanks to his exceptional abilities.

During my stay in Berlin G. Bernhardt was concurrently the main editor of "Die Fossishe Zeitung", one of the most influential newspapers in Germany, a member of the German Reichstag and of the Economic Council of the Republic, chairman of the Union of German Journalists, lecturer at our Institute and publisher of the economic magazine "Berliner Tagebuch".

His lectures were very well attended by the students since they were exceptionally lively and witty.

"When I was a beginning journalist", Bernhardt told us, "and anyone standing at the helm did something which neither I nor anyone else could understand, I was filled with admiration for him, telling myself look, he is doing something that nobody is able to understand. But when I grew wiser, " Bernhardt continued, "I realized that when they do a thing which nobody understands, it is most probably entirely useless.

Professor Eltzbacher read Law, which included civil, commercial, debenture and check law; professor Manes read Insurance.

The study of national economy included political economy, economic policy, the history of economic studies and also tax theory and national trade and payment balances.

I would also like to mention here Morris Julius Bonn, one of the few Jewish professors at the Institute.

The son of a Frankfurt banker, married to an English Lady, Bonn declared that he set himself the task of not giving us definite information, which we could find in textbooks, but to develop in us the ability to think logically in "national-economic categories". In accordance with this, it was this ability, rather than the knowledge of economic laws and theories, that professor Bonn was looking for in his students at examinations.

A prominent member of the Democratic party, Bonn wrote front-page articles in the "Berliner Tageblatt", a newspaper which was also read abroad.

"We Germans" Bonn told the students at a lecture, I remember "regard order as the most important quality and refuse the Poles their right to the lands populated by them only because they, we say, will not be able to keep order there. We can not imagine," Bonn continued, "that there are people who are happy without "order"".

I punctually attended the political economy seminar conducted by Melchior Paley, an assistant of prof. Bonn, who was also assistant to the famous sociologist Max Weber until the latter's death.

In the seminar we devoted much time to an English economist, the Jew David Ricardo, who lived at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in whose studies the capitalist dynamic received its first scientific formulation. His so-called "quantitative" theory of the value of money, still serves, somewhat modified, as the point of reference and basis of the contemporary monetary policy.

Ricardo's quantitative theory of the value of paper money received its first baptism of fire when in November of 1923, Hjalmar Schacht introduced in Germany a new paper monetary unit, "Die Rentenmark", instead of the completely devalued mark. The former, in spite of the fact that it had absolutely no backing by gold, nevertheless had the buying power of the prewar mark.

With this fact began the process of the dethroning of gold, since it refuted the then prevailing opinion that the value of paper money even within the country depends on the degree of its backing by gold.

In addition, in the seminar were read essays prepared by the students which were then discussed. I remember that an essay on Marxism of the student named Froynd, a Czechoslovak by birth and a communist by conviction, aroused an especially lively and prolonged discussion.

At the seminar we also discussed works of economists such as:
The Stabilized Dollar, by the American Irving Fisher, whose ideas were the basis of the agreement on the international monetary system in 1944 at the conference at Bretton Woods.
Cartels and Combines by the German Liefer, which discusses the harmful consequences of cartels which, artificially keeping alive enterprises which by all rights should have gone under, decrease the productivity of a country's economy (cartels, as is well known, were permitted in Europe until the Second World War).
The Location of Industry by the German economist Alfred Weber, in which he proves that, of all means of production, the availability of driving energy determines the place in which an industry settles in the majority of cases.
The Swedish economist Gustave Cassel enjoyed great authority and his work [12] was frequently referred to in our seminars.
The English economist Maynard Keynes did not yet enjoy the great renown which he later acquired. From time to time we read the magazine published by him which, if memory does not deceive me, was called "The Restoration of Europe".

In contrast to Petrograd, where I was a rare visitor at the university and studied only as much as I had to in order to pass exams needed for advancement to the next term, in Berlin I greedily devoured the subjects, most especially the one on political economy.

I would also like to note here that, delving deeply into the study of the static and dynamic of the capitalist economy, I did not then regard political economy as an exact science, into which, in my opinion, the economists of today, armed with computers and all other kinds of instruments, are trying to convert this subject.

Berlin was then the world center of science and art and as such afforded great opportunities, I tried to take extensive advantage of them all.

Prior to my departure for Nauheim, I rented a room in a small boarding-house at 15 Pasauer street, at the center of the Western part of the city in which resided the well-to-do part of the population and where I lived until the end of my stay in Berlin.

K.D.W., the only department store in the Western part of the city, (all others were located in the "center"), was located on our sreet which flowed onto Taunzien street, where all the larger stores were located, which in its turn emerged onto the main artery of the "West", Kurfuerstendam, where the best restaurants, cafes and theaters were located.

The streets in Berlin were asphalt and astounded one by their cleanliness; in distinction from the worker's section, which was located in the northern part of the city, the streets of the "West" were wide and lined with trees on both sides and the spacious apartments with running cold water and water closets were for the most part beautifully furnished. The houses were mostly four-story and without elevators.

The city was widely spread out and at that time the population was thought to reach four million.

The main means of transportation in the city of Berlin was, in addition to the underground railroad network already well-developed by that time (which

---

[12] Grundriss der Sozial Ekonomik"

I then first ran into), a so-called Stadt und Ringban, an elevated railroad which ran through the city and connected it with the suburbs. Long distance trains also ran on this railroad.

The Tiergarten - a large park, divided the Western part of the city from the "center" where:

on the boulvard "Unter den Linden" were located the royal palace, university, fashionable hotels (Esplanade, Adlon and others);

on Leipziger and adjoining streets department stores [13] and other large stores;

on Behren and adjoining streets were located the largest four banks in Germany then, the so-called "D" banks [14].

Berlin was overflowing with foreigners then, predominantly wealthy people who fled Russia because of the revolution.

They all found quite comfortable refuge in the Western part of the city and in the majority of cases, changing foreign currency (dollars, pounds, and so on) to the German mark which was further devaluating with every day, they also found then the living conditions in Berlin exceptionally inexpensive.

This crowd, knocked off its track by the revolution and idle through no fault of its own, among whom were many Jews, overflowed the streets, restaurants and theaters.

In connection with this they joked in Berlin that a policemen, standing in the center of the city near Gedechniskirche, hung himself out of homesickness.

What was worse, however, crowds of foreigners overflowed the stores and bought up everything for next to nothing since the German storekeeper was unable to keep pace with inflation and his prices did not fully reflect the swift devaluation of the paper Reichsmark.

In those days hatred towards the foreigners, especially the Jews was thus sown among the German middle classes, hatred which found its exuberant blooming during the days of Hitlerite National-Socialism.

By its speed and dimensions, the devaluation of the German paper monetary unit- especially after the occupation of the Ruhr basin by the French in the beginning og 1923 - took on a character unheard of in the annals of history.

I recall that at this time I was afraid to remain with the marks overnight, since on the following day they already had a significantly lesser value; I already had a whole drawerful of "defunct" banknotes, since it was already impossible to buy anythig with them, even a box of matches.

The day of November 15, 1923, also comes to mind. It was on the eve of the introduction of the new "Rentenmark", when I received 16 trillion marks for a dollar on the black market - four times more than the official rate on that day. Before the war the exchange rate of the dollar equalled 4.2 German marks.

I cite all these facts in order to impart an idea of what was happening in Germany in those days.

All this was especially hard on people living on a pension, whose savings dwindled away completely and on the worker, who by the end of the week already could buy nothing with his wages.

It should be noted here that the complete devaluation of the German mark, provoked by the unlimited printing by the government of paper money, brought on an enrichment of one part of the population the debtors, at the expense of another part of the population - the creditors; more accurately - an enrichment of industry, which absorbed peoples savings through the banks, at the expense of other classes of the population who had created the savings.

---

[13] Wertheim, Tietz, Israel

[14] Deutsche, Dresdener, Diskonto, Darmstedter and Nazional

It also should be noted that on the background of general impoverishment, some individuals were able to use inflation to create enormous fortunes for themselves.
A striking representative of the latter was Hugo Stines, proprietor of a moderate size coal business in Mulheim on the Rhine before the war.
Stines understood earlier than others that during inflation it was profitable to be as much in debt as possible - in accordance with this he bought real property on credit wherever he could, in order to pay his debts somewhat later with marks which had lost a great part of their value during that time.

By the time of my arrival in Germany, enormous steel mills, coal mines, navigation companies, an automobile factory, the best hotels in Berlin, a cellulose factory, newspapers, joint-stock banks and others had entered the industrial empire created by Stines.
In the summer of 1923 Hugo Stines died unexpectedly. I was by chance in the Des Westens sanatorium on Ranke street when they reported his death after an operation performed by the well known surgeon, professor Bier.
Apparently there was not enough internal cohesion and solid basis for the enormous industrial empire of Hugo Stines, created hurriedly and thanks to undeserved enrichment in unhealthy conditions of inflation, for it disintegrated soon after his death.

I had already been in Germany before, but this time I came from the East, where the hurricane of revolution which swept through those lands had destroyed everything to the foundations.
There, from where I had come, people filled with a spirit of protest demanded a reevaluation of old values, not only of the material but also of the moral ones; they discovered new gods, found a new truth of life, put content above form which they have not yet found and sought new ways.

Despite the fact that Germany had passed through a revolution too, I found there untouched the old world with its old traditions and form which was regarded as a part of order - and order the Germans continued to place above all.
Devoid of pathos since it was calculatedly sober, the revolution had passed through with the least infringement of the old order and did not leave any traces in the German psyche.

The contrast was still further emphasized by the fact that I had come from an agricultural country to a highly industrialized one; this stamped its seal on the psyche and mentality of its population and was reflected in a materialization of the spirit and in the depersonalization of the individual.

The latter tendency was expressed in the character of the First World War, especially in the trench warfare of the western front.

I recall that I was astonished when I was faced with the fact which showed that in Germany women, as representatives of a weaker sex, were not granted a priviledged position as they did among us in the east.
I was thus surprised when my landlady, Mrs Reifschneider, a mistress of two servants, considered it her duty, when her husband, a wealthy merchant, came home and sat in an armchair, to daily go down on her knees to take off his boots and put on his comfortable, soft house slippers.
My colleague at the Institute, Kazim, the son of a Turkish Bey, also could not easily reconcile himself with the fact that the German woman was removed from a pedestal.
"In Turkey," he told me, "we even die for women".

I will not expand here on the well known German industriousness and method. I only wish to add that their pettiness, somewhat unpleasant to us then, was more than compensated by their conscientiousness and punctuality.

In general, this was a people that not only inspired trust, but also deserved it. (I did not have this impression when the Germans, led by Hitler, occupied Wilno in 1941.)

As regards German anti-Semitism, in the light of what occurred a little less than ten years later, what I will say here will seem preposterous.
However, for all the time of my more than two-year stay in Germany I personally did not encounter any acts of anti-Semitism, in relation to myself as well as to other Jews in my presence.
To be sure, the Wilno students who studied in small cities recounted anti-Semitic ocurrences which took place there, but in Berlin then one could not feel any anti-Jewish feelings. I also did not encounter them when I went for vacation to Saxon Switzerland (Shandau) for Christmas and to the Schwarzwald (Titisee) for summer vacation.

My relations with my German colleagues at the Institute were very correct and with several even cordial. I personally did not have any contact with student members of the so-called fraternities which preserved their medieval ritual.

At the time of my arrival the Jews composed only one percent of Germany's population, but their contribution to the unusual growth of the country in an economic and cultural respect in the course of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was disproportionate with their number.
As noted before, the assimilation of Jews to the secular culture had begun in Germany a hundred years earlier than that of their fellows in Russia.
However, in distinction from Russian Jews, among whom the process of assimilation was rarely accompanied by a departure from Jewry, among German Jews we encounter frequent cases of baptism, especially when assimilated Jews achieved fame or wealth.
In my time many Jews who had emigrated from the East lived in Germany, especially in Berlin; the German Jews looked down on them superciliously.

Regarding the economic activity of Jews in Germany, I want to point out first of all the exceptionally important and beneficial role which they played in the creation and functioning of the German banking system.
It will not be an exageration to say that the unprecedented growth of German industry would have been unthinkable without the active participation and in many cases the initiative of German banks.
Their activity was broader than that of banking institutions in Anglo Saxon countries, for in addition to usual bank operations, German banks also undertook the founding and financing, by means of an issue of stock, of new enterprises, their merger and, when it was needed, the normalization and reorganization of enterprises.

The degree of participation of the Jews in Germany's commercial banks, playing, as I mentioned before, a large role in the development of the country's productive forces, is delineated by the following data.[15]

---

[15] In the so called "Stempel Vereinigung", uniting (in relation to banking conditions), eleven of the largest German banks - seven incorporated banks (the already mentioned by me 4D banks among them) and four Banking Houses.

The Jewish participation in them was as follows: three of the 4D banks - Dresdener, Disconto and Darmstedter were founded and managed by Jews and the largest Deutsche Bank, though established by a non Jew (Siemens), was managed by Oscar Wasserman, a Jew, who for twenty years (up to the coming to power of Hitler) had been its head director. Karl Fuerstenberg, a Jew renowned for his wit was the owner and director of the fifth largest bank - the Berliner Handelsgescheft.

The four Banking Houses belonging to the Stempelvereinigung were founded and managed by Jews, Direct Jewish industrial activity was limited to light industry.

As mentioned before, Emil Ratenau founded the United Electrical Company, (AEG) with branches all over Europe and Russia.

Almost all the tobacco industry (concentrated around Dresden) was in Jewish Hands.

The largest shipping company in Germany, the Hamburg - America Line, (Hapag) had been established by Albert Ballin, a personal friend of the Kaiser.

The railroads in Germany were exclusively government owned.

The majority of the department stores belonged to the Jews, who had pioneered this field [16]

In the capital city of Berlin, the Jews dominated the press. [17]

It should be stressed that the German Jews did not limit their activity to the field of commerce.

Mostly members of the intelligentsia, they were very well represented in quality as well as in quantity in the professions as scientists, attorneys and physicians (some of the latter, like the gynecologist Leopold Landau, renowned all over Europe).

Recipients of the Nobel prize:

Albert Einstein for the Theory of Relativity

Paul Ehrlich, discoverer of Salvarsan 914 for the treatment of syphilis (incurable until then)

Fritz Haber, for the synthesis of ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen, and the development of nitrogen compound (fertilizer) production out of the atmospheric nitrogen. The latter was especially deserving of his country's gratitude - during the war the English blockade had cut Germany off from the Chilean Saltpeter and Haber's discovery literally saved Germany from starvation.

Besides the classical poet Heinrich Heine, in our century the Jewish writers like Arnold and Stephan Zweig, Franz Werfel and Arthur Schnitzler enriched the German literature with their works.

The German Jewry had brought forth Emil Ludwig and Maximilian Harder, distinguished journalists whose voice was also heard outside of the German borders. I will conclude my less than detailed overview of the German Jewry's contribution to their country's progress with director Max Reingarten, creator of the German Art Theater, the world renowned conductors Bruno Walters and Otto Klemperer and the artist Max Lieberman (president of the German Art Academy)

I also need to underscore the great patriotism of the German Jewry and their assimilation - even the frequent conversions both among the tycoons and the intelligentsia.

During the first World War, as their blood offering the Jews paid with the lives of 12,000 of their sons.

---

although two of the owners, Mendelssohn and Bleichrode (Bismarck's banker) converted to Christianity. Moreover, in Berlin as well as in other German cities, there existed numerous Jewish Banking Houses some of which, as the Warburg Bank in Hanburg, were quite large.

[16] Among them the already mentioned four largest: Wertheim, Tits, Israel and Jandorf.

[17] Headed by Rudolf Mosse, the editor of the serious & influantial Berliner Tageblatt and Ullstein, the editor of "Die Fossishe Zeitung", "Die Morgenpost", "Berliner Zeitung am Mittag" and "Die Berliner Illustrierte".

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that in spite of its undoubtedly positive character, the German Jewry did not escape the hate of their countrymen and was the first victim of their merciless slaughter.

This fact points clearly to the complexity of the problem of antiSemitism and shows that those who saw its causes in religion and in Jewish insularity only, were simplifying the problem of antiSemitism unduly.

Many Russian emigrants had settled in Berlin, as noted before. In the beginning twenties Berlin grew into a large Russian cultural center with a daily newspaper, a scientific Institute, publishers, lectures, a permanent Russian-language theater and guest appearances of theaters and artists from Russia.

During my sojourn in Berlin in 1923 the Moscow Artistic Theater with it's classical repertoire was appearing there, headed by [18] I remember that I would let no perfomance go by without attending, including their last one in which the famous artists performed their favorite roles.
I also remember the especially strong impression made on me by Moskvin in the role of "Tzar Fedor Ivanovitch".
Not all the artists went back to Moscow. The so called "Paris Group" with Massalitinov stayed behind.
To that time belong the performances in Berlin of the "Moscow Camera Theater" with director Tairov and headed by the artists Koonen and Tseretelli.
In cotrast to the artists faithful to the old realistic school Tairov was an innovator. In the three Performances I saw - "Adrienne Lequevrer", "Zirofle - Zirofla" and "Princess Brambila ", in his search of new paths in dramatic art Tairov tried to coordinate the dialogue of the play with musical rhythm and movement.
The Moscow Miniature Theater "Blue Bird" moved permanently to Berlin with its director Juzhny and settled on Holzstrasse.
During the time of my stay there appeared (rather popular in wartime in Russia), Vladimir Khenkin with his Caucasian songs and Alexander Vertinski with his "mood songs".

I remember that I attended the open meetings of the Religious Philosophical Sociaty which, headed by Vladimir Khenkin had moved to Berlin from Moscow. The other members of the society who settled in Berlin and took part in its stormy meetings were: [19]

Katerina Kuskova, later popular among the "emigrants" was a frequent visitor at the meetings with her husband Prikipovitch, an important "Eser". I remember that once Viktor Chernov, (the head of the All Russian Nominating Congress, scattered by the Bolsheviks) took part in one stormy meeting.
The members of this Society furnished the lecturers for the Russian Academic Institute in Berlin whose lectures I would attend, time permitting. As I could see, the German scholar's systematic, logical thinking without pathos but also without lacunae was absent in the Russians whose thoughts soared higher, but also frequently fell lower.

---

[18] Stanislawski, Moskvin, Katchalov, Massalitinov, Olga Chekhov - Kiper & Terasova.
[19] Frank, Losski, Karsavin, Wisheslavtzev, Stepun - all well known people. From the important members of the society the following were missing: Bulgakov, Dimitri Berezhkovski with his wife Zinaida Gippius (the latter settled in Paris).

Another meeting place where Russian writers and political activists appeared frequently was the Coffee House Leona on Kleiststrasse. In this "Leona" I was present during a probing discussion of a new book "The Moral visage of the Russian Revolution" by Steinberg, the former Comissar of Justice in Lenin's Government and also during a report given by the "Narodnik" Melgunov and another report given, upon his arrival from Paris, by the writer Aldanov, author of the popular trilogy "Devils Bridge" and "Saint Helena is a small island", to mention just a few.

Among the impoprtant Russian musicians were Sergei Kusevitzki and Steinhoff - conductors of the Philharmoninic and Nikolai Orlow, the well received pianist and Chopin performer.

It also seems worth while to mention the Russian "Caffee Rusho" on Ansbacher where at one time, together with my boardinghouse neighbour, the Kiev pianist Pola Vitkup played the subsequently famous violincellist Piatigorski.

Returning to the performances in Berlin of individual Russian artists, I remember the performance of opera arias and romances "In the Midst of the Clamorous Ball" of Tchaikovski by the famous tenor Sobinov, (by then elderly and hard of breathing); in the opera Rigoletto of the well known baritone Baklanov; the talented dramatic artist Polevitzka, whose reading of "The twelve" by Alexaner Blok made a very deep impression upon me.

I recall the appearance in Berlin of the prima-ballerina of the Imperial Ballet, the incomparable Tamara Karsavina. I remember the prolonged thunder of applause with which she was met by the audience overflowing the huge Sport Palace hall on Motzstrasse when she was carried in in the arms of her partner Vladimirov under the strains of a Chopen Walz (if my memory serves me).

To conclude my description of the "Russian Season" in Berlin at that time, I want to mention the exposition of paintings from Russia by the artists Korovin, Kustodiev, Malavin (Baby) and others.

Looking back on this period of my life in Berlin, I realize that I acquired there not only useful knowledge, but I also learned to discipline my thinking, introducing reason into my life, shaking off (if it had clung to me) the so called "Russian dreamy eccentricity". I also had the privilege of a closer acquaintance with the West European cultural heritage.

As I mentioned before, Berlin was a great cultural center (on a world scale), a concentration of scientific thought and of art and thus it represented a great opportunity for me to broaden my horizons.
In all modesty, I must say that I took full advantage of these opportunities.

I doubtlessly deepened and broadened my mental horizons by attending the open meetings of the German Philosophical Society (Die Kantgesellschaft) where I heard the reports of professors Gilbert (its chairman) and Dessoir and also many different lectures - I still remember the brilliant lecture by Aaron Steinberg (the brother of the Comissar) about "The psychological peculiarities of the Jewish people"

It was only in Berlin that I got deeply interested, although as a spectator only, in symphonic music and pictorial art. At the time of my arrival to Berlin the pianist and intrpreter of Bach Ferruccio Busoni and the Leipzig Gevandthouse and Berlin Philharmonic conductor Nikish, (very popular in Germany) were not alive any more.

But up to the end of my sojourn in Berlin I diligently attended the Sunday rehearsals of the symphonic concerts of the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Nikish's substitute, Wilhelm Furchtwangler.

In Germany I became a lover of Beethoven, who continues to be my favorite composer. I also remember that Beethoven's fourth concert for piano and orchestra, played by the German artist Konrad Anzorg brought me to the verge of ecstasy.

Only in Germany, after hearing it well executed, did I start to enjoy the music of Richard Wagner whom I didn't like before. I remember that I was unable to sit to the end of Wagner's opera Tanhauser in Petersburg.

In Berlin I had the opportunity of hearing a multiplicity of musical virtuosos, like Fritz Kreisler - already a world famous violinist and the pianist Eugene D'Albert, recognised as one of the best executors of Beethoven, who it was attested had won a competition with the "great" Russian pianist and composer, Anthon Rubinstein.

In Berlin at that time I developed a great interest for painting, frequently visiting the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum with its paintings from the Renaissance epoch,[20]
I was also a frequent guest in the Berlin National Gallery where I saw the pictures of the German Masters of the 18th and 19th century [21] to mention just the few remaining in my memory. The paintings of Menzel could be also found in the royal palace of Sansouci in Potsdam, where the philosopher Voltaire lived at one time.

The fact that living in Berlin I visited the famous Zwinger gallery of Dresden twice testifies to my newly awakened interest in the pictorial arts. In the Zwinger I saw Raphael's Madonna Sistina.

In conclusion, talking about the circumstances that played a role in the formation of my intellect, my esthetic taste and of my cultural level, I would also like to mention my frequent attendance (during my Berlin stay) of the highly accomplished dramatic theaters such as the Deutches Theater of Max Reingart with talented actors [22] or the Shiller Theater with Emil Jannings, later world famous as Marlene Dietrich's partner in the cinema.

I would like to add that living in Germany at that time I didn't enrich my intellect alone. I also acquired there the habit of long daily walks which, as the physicians say, kept me in reasonably good health till a relatively mature age.

During some of my vacations, the Christmas of 1922 in Saxon Switzerland (Schandau) and the summer of 1923 in Schwarzwald (Titisee) I became deeply fond of long hikes, very popular among the German youth.

---

[20] not limited to German masters like Albrecht Duerer, Hans Holbein (father and son) and Lukas Cranach, but also Italian like Titian, Guido Reni, Filippo Lippi; Spanish - like Velasquez, Murillo, de Ribera; Dutch - like Rembrandt, Vermeer, Ruisdael; Flemish - like Rubens, Van Dyck, Breughel (to mention just the most outstanding).

[21] like Menzel, Boeklin, Hans Makart, Knaus, Max Lieberman

[22] like Kaethe, Dorschand, Werner Kraus

I crisscrossed both Schandau and Titisee and their vicinities, climbing all the accessible mountain peaks, including the highest in the Schwarzwald (about 1500 meters), the Feldberg mountain peak.

I remember that, accompanied by Luda Baksht from Wilno and her friend, I went fom Titisee to Freiburg, walking on the highway and spending the night in a little backwoods hostel. We were amazed by its comfort and cleanliness. In Freiburg , I remember, we were enchanted by the beautiful view of the Rhein valley and the French Vogesee on the other shore of the river. From there I went by myself to the town of Badenweller, where the Russian writer and playwright Anton Pavlovich Chekhov died of tuberculosis in 1904.

One should admit that in this period of galloping inflation of the German Mark, for us foreigners everything in Germany was very inexpensive. Thus, for instance, for a railroad ticket from Berlin to Schwarzwald I paid only half a dollar. The so called inexpensive life for the foreigners in Germany ended with the introduction of the new paper Rentenmark.

As I've mentioned before, even though this new German currency was completely devoid of gold backing, its internal purchase capacity, as well as the originally established exchange to foreign currencies appeared constant. The introduction of this money unit stabilized the economic conditions of the country temporarily. At the conclusion of a lengthy and unsuccessful war which had exhausted its material resources the country fell prey to galloping inflation which brought complete impoverishment to the broad masses of its population.

The events in Germany were ifluenced not only by material privations borne by the majority of the population -it was combined with the bitterness and disappointment of a people who had to suffer the perversity of destiny. In the course of four long years of the war, the German people had shown their unshakeable will for victory by uncomplainingly withstanding daily hunger and, stopping at no sacrifice, sending thousands of their best sons to die.

As late as the summer of 1918 when Germany succeeded in liquidating the second (eastern) front and broke through in four places on the western front coming close to Paris, it seemed that they were a hairs breadth away from victory which would compensate them for their blood sacrifices and dire privations. Under these circumstances the fact, that in the fall of that same year Germany, whose armies were still occupiyng enemy territory, was forced to admit defeat unconditionally, giving herself over to the mercy of the victors and then accepting the cruel conditions of the treaty of Versailles, could not but deeply wound the national pride of the German people and awaken a strong desire for revenge.

These conditions in Germany, the spiritual suffering and material privations (which worsened with the economic world crisis in the latter part of the twenties) transformed Germany and her people into a powder keg in the center of Europe which, as we well know, would soon explode, jarring the whole world to its foundations.

I would like to remark that Europe had remained faithful to its history.

As in other disasters, like during the so called "black death" (the plague) in the 14th century and others, at this time too the majority decided that the

Jews were to blame....but lets not skip ahead. The speedy growth of extremist parties was the immediate result of the circumstances described by me - communists on the left and on the right the newly named fascists.

They were all equal in their hatred of the democratic forms of government and their urge to overthrow the democratic Weimar Republic, elected by the majority of the German people.

I must confess that in November of 1923 I did not appreciate the gravity of the unsuccessful Munich attempt of Hitler, (already the head of the National Socialist party) together with general Ludendorf, to overthrow the democratic government of Bavaria - the so called "Bierhalleputsch".

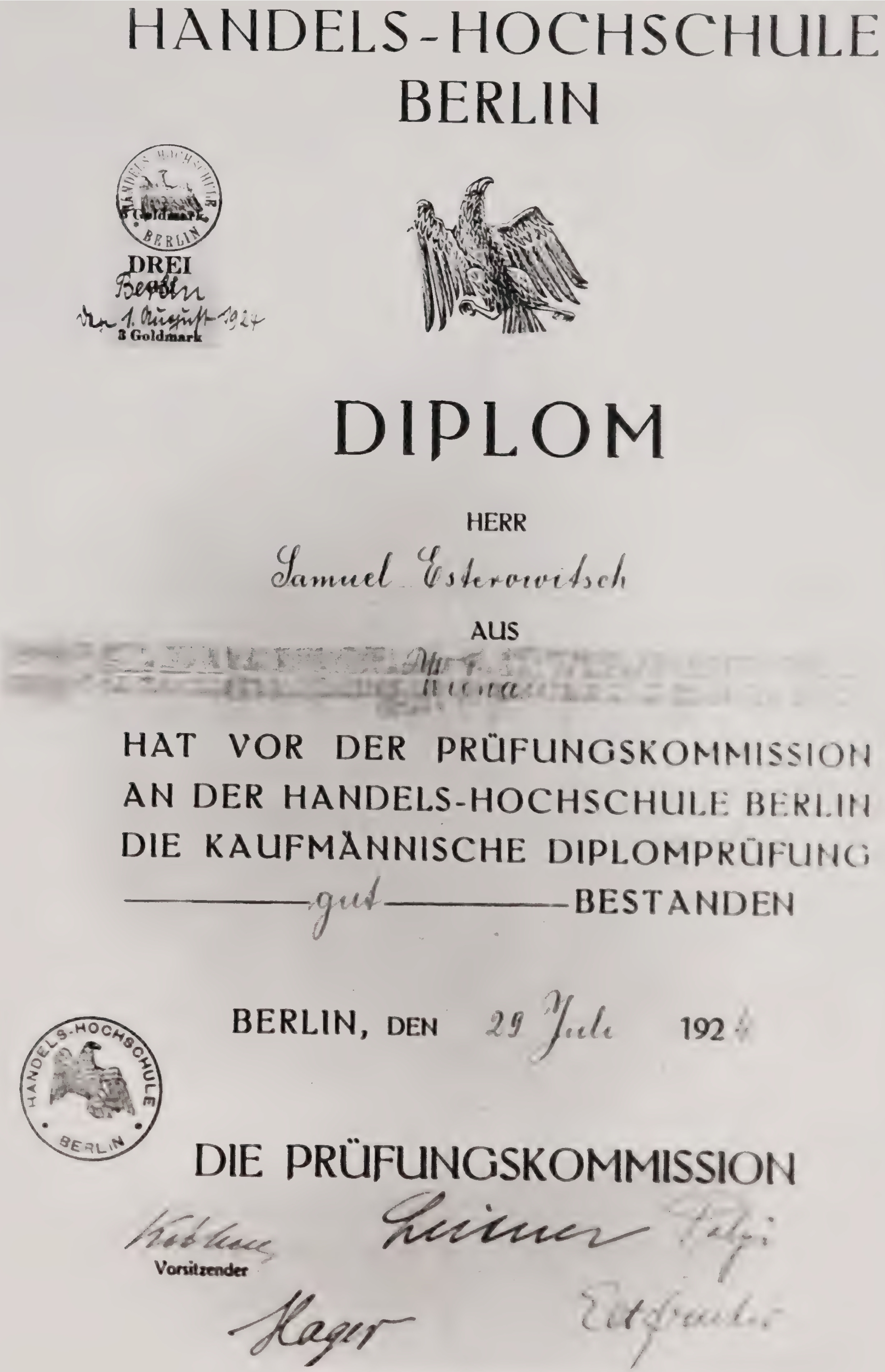
Hitler was put into the Landsberg fortress as punishment. There he had written the National Socialist Bible, "Mein Kampf" saturated with primitive German chauvinism and hate for the communists and the world Jewry.

No one paid much attention to Hitler's book, it was hard to admit that the German people, who gave Kant, the founder of the rationalistic school of thinking to the world could fall victim to the ridiculous, primitive political concepts which simplified the world immeasurably, declaring that all the problems of the German people, both political and social (some of them thousand of years old and others unavoidable) were the exclusive result of a plot of the all- powerful world Jewry.

Returning to the events of of my personal life the following events come to mind: In the fall of 1923 Lena, the younger daughter of Lazar Sheniuk, came to Berlin and asked me to help her with arrangements there. I placed her in a boardinghouse nearby, owned by a Russian calling himself a Tartar prince. About one week later, it must have been near dawn, Lena burst into my room crying that she had to run away from the boarding house - the landlord broke into her room and tried to rape her. I had to place Lena (temporarily, until I found another room for her) with my boardinghouse neighbour, Anna Osipovna Michailovska, a woman physician from Kiev with whom I had become friendly. I remember that when I went with Anna Osipovna to the boardinghouse next morning, I could get Lena's belongings out only with great difficulty and moreover the "prince" threatened to beat me up.

Anna Osipovna, a middle aged lady, specialized in Berlin in roentgenology and was supported by her brother, Fedor Mikhailovski a wealthy lumber merchant who lived in Danzig. The kind of intellectual idealist that I found only in Russia with any frequency, she had worked as a physician for tens of years in county and city hospitals in Moscow. Working in city hospitals she daily came in contact with cases where a "Marusia" (poor ignorant young girl) would poison hersef by drinking carbolic acid.
In the majority of cases the cause of the suicide attempt was romantic and the "Marusia's" were almost always resuscitated. When such a "Marusia" would be brought in, the director of the clinic who apparently didn't take these "tragedies" too seriously and was annoyed by the daily repetitions, would ask the (almost always foiled) suicide attempter: "How much worth did you drink?" and usually was answered : "Ten kopek's worth", he would declare, exasperated: "How many times did I say, if you want to poison yourself, drink twenty kopek's worth".

At that time in Berlin I had a chance of marrying a rich girl.
My Father had punctually arranged to get money to me. I would receive it from the attorney Vishnevski - a converted Jew from Uman, whereupon my father



HANDELS-HOCHSCHULE
BERLIN

3 Goldmark
DREI
Berlin
den 1. August 1924
3 Goldmark

DIPLOM

HERR

Samuel Esterowitsch

AUS

[illegible]

HAT VOR DER PRÜFUNGSKOMMISSION
AN DER HANDELS-HOCHSCHULE BERLIN
DIE KAUFMÄNNISCHE DIPLOMPRÜFUNG
——— gut ——— BESTANDEN

BERLIN, DEN 29 Juli 1924

DIE PRÜFUNGSKOMMISSION

Vorsitzender

Hager

BERLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL DIPLOMA

SAMUEL ESTEROWITSCH from WILNO
passed well the examination for the ECONOMICS DIPLOMA before the Business

School Examination Commisssion.   BERLIN, July 29th, 1924

Leiba Esterowicz, circa 1899

Munya Esterowicz, circa 1935

Yefim Esterowicz, circa 1925

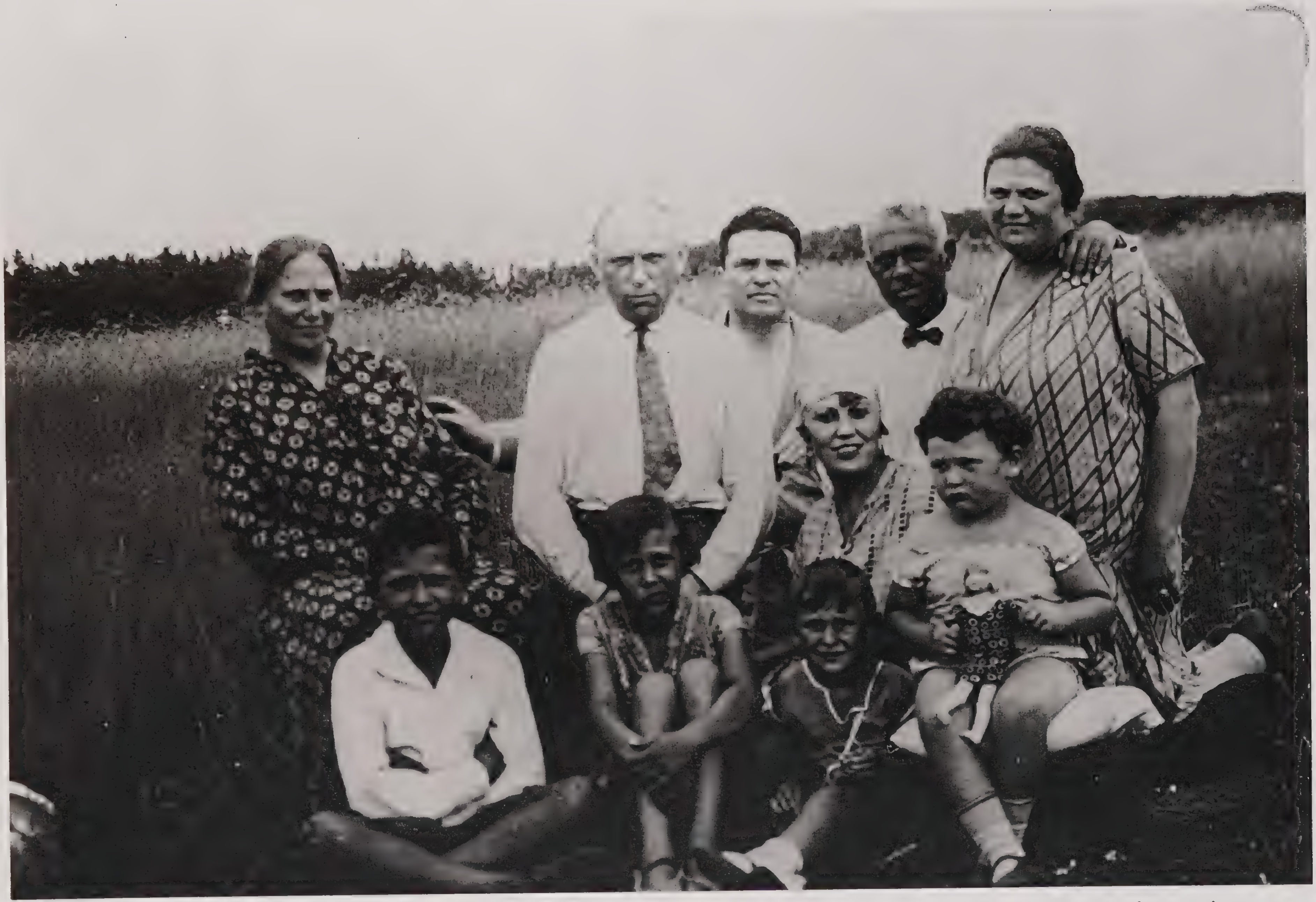
Gera, Eva Eisurowicz, circa 1925

Sasha, Anya, Shela Mintz circa 1930

Eva Eisurowicz, circa 1939

Margalit Esterowicz, circa 1939

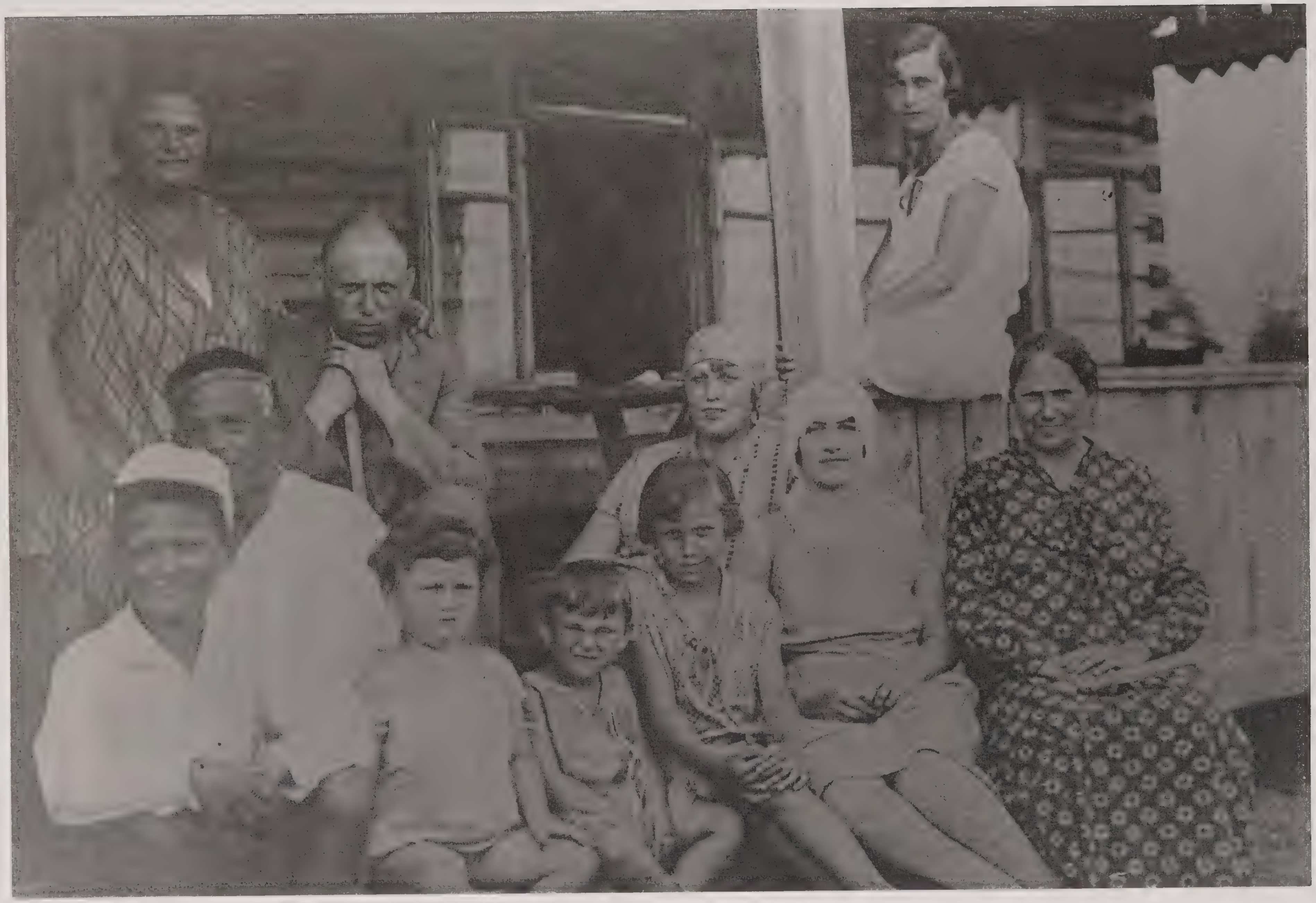
Shela and Sasha Mintz, circa 1930



Upper row: Margalit Esterowicz, Samuel Esterowicz, Sasha Mintz, Aron Eisurowicz, Emma Eisurowicz

lower row: Gera Eisurowicz, Eva Eisurowicz, (Over, Anya Mintz,) Zhenya Gerstein, Shela Mintz

Wilno, circa 1927



Upper row: Emma Eisurowicz, Samuel Esterowicz, Anya Mintz, Mera Gerstein

Lower row: Gera Eisurowicz, part Aron Eisurowicz, Shela Mintz, Zhenya Gerstein Ida Esterowicz
Margalit Esterowicz
Wilno, circa 1927

would pay the same sum to Vishnevski's daughter, the wife of a Polish doctor. The attoney Vishnevski, on whom I, apparently, made a good impression, presented me to his niece, a rather pretty young Jewish girl, daughter of his brother, according to him a rich businessman, owner of a large jewellery business on Berlin's main commercial street, the Leipzigerstrasse. According to Vishnevski, his brother intended to move his jewellery business to Paris, where the whole family intended to settle. He proposed that I should marry his brother's only daughter, enter his business and move to Paris with them.

In answer I declared that I couldn't accept his offer because such "marriage for business reasons" was against my convictions. I have to add that another reason why it would be difficult for me to accept Mr Vishinski's offer was that at that time I was going out with Raya Ribush from Riga, a student at our Institute with whom I was in love.

As almost all the Jewish girls from well-to-do families did at that time, Raya enrolled at the Commercial Institute not with the aim of preparing for a profession, but to find among the students a companion - a husband. During the winter of 1923 - 1924 we often attended theater performances and concerts together and visited museums. In the spring our relations reached the point where I had to propose marriage or discontinue our meetings.

However difficult it may have been, I must have subconscoiusly, chosen the second eventuality since an analysis of my financial possibilities told me clearly that in the present circumstances, after graduation from the Institute I would not be able to maintain a wife whose input would be limited to performing the duties of a housekeeper and (perhaps) a mother.

The road toward salaried scientific work (for which I had the needed abilities and preparation, as well as a great interest in the fields of history, economics and international relations) was closed to me in Germany because I was a foreigner, in Poland because I was a Jew. The possibilities of working with my father in the lumber business were not much brighter. According to letters from my family, besides the disastrous results of the distillery business, my father's usually profitable lumber export was at a complete standstill (partially because of the sudden death of V.G Isserlin), but mostly because of the abrupt decline of the prices of lumber materials.

My "break up" with Raya had a negative effect (unexpectedly for me) on my up to then excellent relations with professor Melchior Paley (a great friend of Raya), who was to evaluate my dissertation on the "Urban land lease". As a consequence, even though my abilities to think in politico - economical cathegories were highly regarded by both professor Paley and my German fellow students, who nicknamed me "Die Volkwirtschaftliche Kanone", my dissertation was evaluated as only "satisfactory" by docter Paley. In August of 1924, after having successfully past the written and oral graduation exams, I was awarded a diploma from the Business Institute of Berlin, with the title of "Business Diplomate".

I returned to Wilno immediately. I did not suspect, leaving Germany, that the same nation which had given me so much would soon play a disastrous part in my life.

WILNO

Return to Wilno
Family financial difficulties
Polish economic antisemitism
The ruin of many enterprises
Jews the only enterprising element
Wilno's economic decline
Creative and beneficial role of the Jews
Jewish successs and inventiveness were the Jewish "crime"
Description of "big" Kola
I start work at the Sheynyuk sawmill
Pilsudski takes over power
Death of beloved father - the fallacy of atheism
I meet my future wife, Ida Gerstein, we get married
Initial success in business, luxurious apartment
The idle lives of wives of our generation
Birth of our daughter Perella
Death of my father-in-law
I take over franchises, modest income, I curtail expenses
My income increases sharply because of Electryt
Steadfast business principles contributed to our survival
Description of my friend Alesha and family

I now approach with a heavy heart the description of a very distressing period in the life of our family, both in connection with financial difficulties and the premature death of my Father. While I invariably received from my Father the funds for a pleasant, comfortable life in Berlin, I never suspected that as of late it had become beyond my Father's means. I knew that there were worsened circumstances at home, but the reality, when seen from proximity, turned out much worse than I expected.

My Father's financial situation was desperate mostly because, in addition to his personal misadventures, he was involved with his children, whose well-being was always close to his loving Father's heart. At that time all of us, withot exception, needed his help.
This coincided with the time when my Father was deprived of the income from his lumber export and when it appeared that his losses on the distillery were not limited to the capital invested - even after the liquidation of this unsuccessful business, my Father still had to pay the huge government taxes, unpaid before.

My brother Yefim, (by then a father of two children), who was maintained by my Father and given an apartment in our building was joined by my sister Anya in the spring of 1924. Anya had to return to her parent's house with her husband and daughter because of the business failure of her husband. Sasha not only lost Anya's dowry by buying German Marks which got completely devaluated, he also lost heavily on a textile business venture and my Father had to pay his debts. In order to be able to do this, Father had to sell the bank notes of the Petrograd -Tula Territorial Bank for 13,000 rubles, which he previously bought as cover for the mortgage on our apartment house on 28 Wilkomirska street. With the passage of Wilno to Poland, this ortgage was taken over by the Territorial Bank of Wilno.

My brother David's situation was especially hopeless, his career aspirations shattered. He had interrupted his Medical School education to help our Father with the distillery, and after four years there seemed very few possibilities for him to be included in the business life of the country, especially during a recession.
In spite of my diploma I was not much better off - my chances of getting a suitable, remunerated position in which I could utilize my theoretical knowledge were nil - my Polish was poor and I was Jewish.

In evaluating the situation one has to take into consideration the fact that our financial circumstances were complicated by the then prevalent class prejudices. This was the time when women were occupied with houshold and children only; any physical work, even that of a craftsman, was thought degrading.
At the time of my coming home Aaron Eisurowicz, the husband of my sister Emma, seemed to be doing well. Aaron had a technical office on Wilenska street, from which he serviced industrial companies. At the same time he had a retail business which stocked technical and electrotechnical supplies. This business employed a few people, among them the former Tzarist Army officer Poluektov as bookkeeper. Aaron was a tireless and endlessly energetic worker and as a businessman he was certainly honest, but as we will see he was also rather frivolous, bordering on irresponsibility. As a former employee of the largest before the war technical office in the north-western area, which was headed by Polish engineers Guszcza and Malinowski, Aaron had wide and at that time useful connections among Polish landowners, managers of agricultural enterprises and engineers in governmental positions.

When after my return from Berlin I visited them at the summer house they leased in the fashionable summer area of Wolokumpia there was no inkling of the imminent crisis in Aaron's business affairs. Aaron and Emma continued to lead a comfortable way of life and Aaron his frequent trips to Warsaw, returning from where, as a good family man he would bring expensive gifts for everybody (including himself).
The family was therefore unprepared for the sudden news that, two months after my return from Berlin Aaron had to share the fate of the majority of Wilno's businessmen and industrialists. They all were victims of the reduction of market size because of the changed position of the city, as well as of the inflation (prior to the introduction in 1924 of the temporarily stable Zloty). But most importantly they were the victims of the high loan intrests (caused by the general impoverishment and the anti Jewish policy of the Credit Bank) on the financial credit which was much needed because of the war's destruction. The price of the latter (in stable currency, which was the American dollar) approached the unheard-of 6% a month.

When Aaron had to stop payments on his merchandise obligations, he owed the local bank on his personal notes, guaranteed by my father, about 3000 dollars. At that time, in impoverished Europe this was a large sum and the neccessity of paying it was for my Father (whose circumstances I just described) an almost impossible task.
Since Aaron's business was (relatively) not doing too badly, upon my Father's request I looked into his bookkeeping, trying to clarify the reasons for his bankruptcy. I saw that, apparently the business was burdened by excessive expenses, partially connected with the rather improper behaviour of Aaron himself. Up to the last moment Aaron was taking trips to Warsaw, where he

received his supplies, and his expenses showed him anything but thrifty. These unneccessary jaunts (he had no problem with getting his supplies on credit, his difficulty lay in the low sales volume) were financed during the last months on money borrowed at 6% a month, the settlement of which had to be guaranteed y my Father.
One has to acknowledge, however, that the main cause of his bankruptcy lay in the exorbitant 6% monthly interest that he had to pay for the financial credit, to which he had to resort because of lack of turnover capital. Evaluating Aaron's behaviour in relation to my Father, one has to remember that a drowning man is (as a rule) most dangerous to his rescuer whom he sometimes drags down into the deep.

The bancruptcy of her husband wounded my sister Emma in her soul's depths, not only because of the financial deprivation it inflicted upon the entire family, but mainly because she felt her husband and she did not do justice to her Father's confidence placed in them and wounded him when he was least able to withstand it.

My Fathers limitless readiness for sacrifice and all-forgiving love for his children is mirrored by the scene that stands even now before my mind's eye. In this difficult moment not a word of reproach, only sympathy and reassurance met the desperate, hurt Emma: Don't worry, darling daughter" sitting at his desk he implored the crying Emma seated before him "please believe me, I am able to help you".
At that time, when my Fathers lumber business was gone and all the children needed his help, the only possible source of income was our property on Wilkomirska street # 28. As mentioned before, it had been purchased in 1906 and consisted of a whole row of brick one and two floor buildings and of a large (about 2.7 acre) parcel of land. Just for the one long single floored wing, serving as barracks for a portion of the Novoturkski regiment, my father used to be paid 3000 rubles yearly lease by the Municipality. In 1910, when the soldiers were transferred to the barracs built by the city on the "Martial Field", my Father had rebuilt the wing into apartments. After the remodeling the property consisted of six stores, one used as space for a restaurant, a very long one floor industrial space which housed a factory of Sorski and Chanenson, manufacturing paraffin-covered paper, and 25 apartments of varied sizes, one of which housed the public school teacher Margolin. Before the war this property, with the gross income of 7000 rubles, after the payment of all upkeep expenses, taxes and mortgage payment to the Petrograd-Tula Land Bank brought in net 4500 rubles a year. Before the war, when rye bread cost two and a half, meat 8 kopecs a pound and a worker earned one ruble a day this income was sufficient for a comfortable living for our expanded family. After the war the income was very much diminished. Because of the inflation in Poland in the first few years after the war the income from real estate was insignificant.

In April of 1924, by the exchanging of 1800,000 of the old marks for one "zloty", a new stable currency was introduced in Poland. At the same time, according to the law for the protection of the apartment tenant the rent money was frozen at the pre war level calculating that one ruble was worth 2.66 zloty. That would not be so bad if it were not that:
1) The stability of the zloty was shaken as early as the spring of 1925; even though the zloty lost half of its value in relation to the dollar, the old relationship of 2.66 zloty per ruble was nevertheless retained as far as the determination of the rent due to the owner.

2) Because of the impoverishment of the city dwelling population, especially the Jews, (all our tenants were Jewish,) a sizable percentage of our tenants were unable to pay even the relatively low rent payment.

I would like to point out a fact characterizing my father : notwithstanding our family's very difficult financial situation I can not remember seeing even one case where my father would forcibly (through a court order) evict a tenant who owed many month's rent.

The conflict in such cases was solved amicably, with the tenant vacating the apartment after my father forgave his debt and moreover gave him a sum of money sufficient for renting an apartment somewhere else.

The following factors influenced negatively the economic situation of all the city dwellers:

The war that lasted in this area two years longer than in the rest of Europe.

The complete devaluation of the money, which oblitrated the population's savings.

Because of its new geographic position, squeezed between two frontiers closed to traffic and commerce, the city lost its significance as the commercial link between Eurasia and Europe and was deprived both of markets for its products and the sources of raw materials for its industries;

Analyzing the causes of the impoverishment of the Jewish population one should note one more factor: the anti Jewish policy of the Polish government.

Since in 1919 Poland had been compelled to sign in Versailles a special pledge to grant the minorities living within its boundaries (boundaries created by the force of arms of the Western Powers) the same civil rights granted the Polish majority, the Polish anti Jewish policy was not mirrored in the Constitution nor in the legislation of Poland (as it had in Tzarist Russia). Nevertheless that circumstance did not keep the Polish Government from shamelessly carrying out their antiSemitic policy.

Let us begin with the fact that that Civil Service jobs were completely closed to Jews - I have not heard of even one case where a Wilno Jew should have gotten a remunerated government position in all the twenty years of Polish rule.

The scientific, medical career of my friend Alesha P. can serve as an illustration of this fact.

After graduating from the Berlin University, he with a degree in medicine, she in chemistry, Alosha and his wife Rachel (born Epstein) returned to Wilno at the same time as I did. After being licensed for practice in Poland by passing the State Board examination, Alosha and Shela settled in the settlement Lachowicze, near the town Baranowicze, where Alosha practiced as a physician for a few years. Their only son Marek was born during their sojourn in Lachowicze - (Marek was the future playmate of my daughter Perella).

After the death of Shela's father, Benjamin Markovitch Epstein, the owner of the brewery "Chopin", Alosha and Shela returned to Wilno upon the insistence of Shela's mother, Vera Vladimirovna (born Vishniak).

After his return Alosha began working, (as a non-remunarated volunteer) in the First University clinic for internal diseases, headed by professor Januszkewicz. For ten years, up to the occupation of our town by the "bolsheviks" in 1939, Alosha continued working as an assistant, without pay. When a paid assistant's position became available in the clinic, it was awarded to a Polish physician, even though he had had no association with the clinic before.

During the "Polish" times in Wilno, there were a few Jews who were government employees, but they were newcomers, mostly from Galicia, whom the

Poles had inherited from the Austrian authorities who were more tolerant towards the Jews.

As to the economic policies of the Polish government, in the first place one needs to point at the hostile policies of the governmental monetary emission bank - not only toward Jewish businessmen and industrialists, but also toward both the private and the public Jewish banks.
Because of the destruction wrought by the six long war years and complete devaluation of the Russian ruble and the Polish mark, the need for credit was acute for rebuilding as well as for the creation of a working capital for the commercial and industrial enterprises.

As I have already mentioned, my Father as well as many other Jewish businessmen maintained a line of credit in the Russian government bank, which awarded credit to all trustworthy enterprises, regardless of creed of their owner.
I do not know of even one instance in which the newly created Polish monetary emission bank, "Bank Polski" has awarded a line of credit to a Jewish businessman.
Since the war and inflation had anihilated all the savings of the population, the "Bank Polski" was the only source of credit available.
The policies of the latter were openly anti Jewish in its relations with the Jewish businessmen and the Jewish private and public banks.
While the Polish owned "Wilno Private Commercial bank" enjoyed a multi-million line of credit for its clients' notes from the Bank Polski (as I personally ascertained ten years later), the Jewish public bank, "Industrial and Business Bank of the City of Wilno", of whose board of directors I was a member, could draw only a meager eighty thousand zloty, for which all the directors had to be personally liable.
By its denial of funds to the Jews in whose hands lay all the commerce and industry of our city, Bank Polski on one hand had slowed the rebuilding of our ruined economy, on the other hand it forced the enterprise owners to seek credit in the exorbitant "Private Market" where they had to pay stupendously high interest rates, besides having to guarantee the loan in dollars. This led to ruin, and after the 1925 fall of the value of the zloty it led to general bankruptcy of the Jewish enterprises.

It should be stressed that the policies of Finance minister Wladyslaw Grabski (fatal in its consequences on Poland's foreign trade, since it halved the value of the zloty) was also partially inspired by antiSemitism: the free trade policy was advantageous to the agrarian sector of the Polish economy which was interested in foreign markets for its grain and in low (depressed by foreign competition) prices for the industrial products it employed; the industrial sector of Polish economy needed the protection from the competition of the highly industrialized West European countries that custom duties on the importation of the products it manufactured would afford it; the industry also wanted to ensure the low price of bread, on which the wages of its workers depended - the industry was therefore least of all interested in the export of grain.

Since in the foreign trade policies the interests of these two important sectors of economy were irreconcilable, the consideration of the country's trade balance should have been decisive - i.e. which policy would balance the goods imported into the country with those exported. These were not the considerations guiding Grabski when, to ensure markets for Polish grain he opened the borders wide to foreign manufactured goods. The fact that the grain was exported by Poland's landowning nobility and the industry belonged predominantly to the Jews and some Germans was doubtlessly decisive.

The fatal results of these policies were not limited to the devaluation of the zloty in the spring of 1925, when it appeared that the surplus of grain in Poland was less than modest, since trying to avoid any further devaluation of the zloty Grabski resorted to the classic method of credit limitation to reduce the quantity of money in circulation. This in turn precipitated a depression with the fall of prices of goods and unemployment.

In this situation the Jewish enterprise owner the value of whose products was depressed (even in the depressed zloty) because of the deflationary monetary policy of the government was also hit by the doubling (in zloty) of his debt which he had to guarantee in dollars; in most cases he was unable to meet the payments on his debt and thus ingloriously ended his business activities. From the commercial point of view, the city of Wilno became a veritable cemetary.

The sawmills and the leather tanneries, having flourished with interlocal importance during the Tzarist times now lay literally in ruins. The largest sawmills situated on the river Wilja [1], the owners of which belonged to the wealthiest residents of our city, with properties of many hundreds of thousnds of rubles, had to declare themselves insolvent and stop their activity permanently.

The tanneries did not fare any better [2]

The largest flour mills in town went bankrupt too - A. Gordon's, count Anton Tyszkiewicz's and the newly built mill of Jaroszewicz and Malinowski- the latter two the only Polish owned industrial enteprises of the city. Many other plants and factories went bankrupt too.

The depression caused by Minister Grabski's severe deflationary policy had not spared the commercial enterprises either. In Poland 90% of those were Jewish owned. In our city even the soundest companies were beset by finacial difficulties. The once wealthy wholesale pharmaceutical company of I.I. Segal which used to have subsidiaries all over Russia, had their own chemical laboratory "Ars" and patented the cream "Casimi" was so beset. So was the big, hundred year old iron trade enterprise of the Brothers Cholem. The other two large iron trade businesses of Felix Desler and Meites had to close their doors permanently.

The difficulties of the general depression were aggravated for the Jewish businessman by the fact that, because the Bank Polski would not give them credit, they were forced to take loans out in dollars, with their own client's notes (for zloty) as their only security, on the exorbitant "private market", mostly from the Banking Bureau of Tovia Bunimovicz (the son of Israel Bunimowicz, the owner of the largest prewar Banking Bureau in Wilno). Tovia charged them the unheard of high interest of 5%-7% a month.

---

[1] A Gordon's, L. Sheniuk's, Y. Parnes, Morgenstern's and brother Perevoski's

[2] Gordon's, Suravitch's, Shabad's, Derm's, Gerzon's, Rivkind's and others

The trust which the bank of Israel Bunimowicz used to enjoy in Wilno was transferred automatically to the bank of his son Tovia, to whom the masses of the Jewish population entrusted their dollars (in most cases received from relatives in America).
The bank of Tovia Bunimowicz was managed by one Samson Dawidowicz K., a man with the narrow mind of a greedy usurer. Mercilessly exploiting the hardships of his clients' situation, K. hastened the ruin of the Wilno merchants by the excessively hard conditions he imposed, thus butchering the cow he was milking (with fatal consequences for the Bunimowicz bank too).

The catastrophic consequences of the falling prices of the merchandise with its attendant losses brought about by the monetary policies of the government (carried out in the name of zloty stability) were doubled for the merchant by a peculiarity of the Polish tax system. In contrast to the Russian national budget which was financed by indirect taxation (excise taxes) exclusively - the tax was added to the purchase price of the merchandise and thus paid by the purchaser, the Polish budget was based, besides on the indirect, on the direct taxes too.

Besides the single time property tax and the progressive income tax, in Poland the industrial and commercial enterprises had to pay (as a supplement to the latter) an additional 2 1/2% turnover tax. In distinction from the sales tax as practiced in the United States and which is paid by the purchaser, the turnover tax taxes all the stages of the manufacturing process, beginning with the production down to the retail sale, and it is paid by the producer.

For instance, in our distillery, even though the alcohol changed owners only once, the turnover tax had to be paid three times, i.e. on the three phases of the production.
The first time as the potato spirit was flowing into the fractionating column, for every liter (according to the meter placed there by the excise board) 1 1/2 grosz - 2 1/2 % of the product value of 60 grosz.
The second time, when the alcohol was converted to vodka, 11 1/2 grosz or 2 1/2 % of the cost to the producer, to this was added the government excise tax of 4 zloty per liter.
The third time at the sale of the finished product.

In enterprises operating at a loss, as was our distillery, and during times of depression so were almost all enterprises, this turnover tax, supposed to be a tax on income, became a permanent property tax, thus deepening the catastrophic depression.

To get the full picture one has to appreciate the merciless method of extracting payment of these unachievable taxation sums:
Carts (nicknamed Grabski's carts) on which the Revenue officials would cart away the merchandise, home furniture and other belongings of the insolvent taxpayers became an everyday sight on the streets of our town.

The city which had prospered, developed and whose population grew steadily during the times of the Czar thanks to its favorable geographic position, at the time of my return from Berlin was still unable to heal the wounds inflicted by war and inflation; it had become a lost, provincial place, with a dying trade and industry which had lost its interlocal importance and a destitute, declining population.

The reason for this sad situation cannot be ascribed solely to the unfavorable change in Wilno's geographic position, which narrowed its export markets and deprived it of most of its sources of raw materials; it was also due to the lethal economic policy of the Polish government which, (inspired by antisemitism) was directed against the Jews. Because of the low cultural level of majority of the gentile population and the indolence of the Polish nobility, the Jews constituted the only active element striving for the improvemnt of the economy.

The government policies primarily defended the interests of the landowning class, frequently against the interests of the country as a whole. During the twenty years of its existance between

the wars, Poland did not even touch upon the matter of the sorely needed agrarian reform which, by bettering the peasants' economic level would raise their consumption, thus indirectly improving the economic situation of the cities.
As I have mentioned before, the Polish landowners retained their often huge estates up to the very end of the second world war, the last six years under the patronage of the Nazi occupier.

Wilno's economic decline can be delineated by the following facts:
The complete absence of rebuilding - except for some governmental edifices; the number of private houses built during that period could be counted on the fingers of one hand;
The population did not reach the pre W.W.I levels up to the beginning of W.W.II.
The impoverished Jewish community was able to maintain its philantropic services only through the help of its American brothers.

It took all of ten to fifteen years before there was a slight regeneration of the city's economic life after the beneficial results of the short lived lumber industry revival were swallowed by the raging inflation.

Because of the exceptionally cheap labor and using some locally available materials some resourceful residents of Wilno (all Jews, it is appropriate to note) began to develop new branches of industry with some success - these gradually assumed more than local importance.
Speaking about these new industries I have to in the first place describe the radio plant "Elektrit". Started by the brothers Samuel and Gregory Chwoles together with Naum Lewin as a small workshop employing two mechanics in 1926, with the capital of $1500, Elektrit grew and prospered and in 1936 employed in its plant 1200 blue collar and clerical workers (a number unheard of in Wilno). As to the quantity of radioreceivers produced, it held second place in Poland, with the first place being held by the multinational electrotechnical giant Phillips which had a factory of radioreceivers in Warsaw. I should also mention that in the years before the second World War my personal financial wellbeing was due to the existence of the factory "Elektrit".

The creative and beneficial role of the Jews of Wilno in the developement of the industrial power of the country can be illustrated and emphasized by the fact that the radioreceivers workshop set up (at the same time as Elektrit) by the engineer Kruzhelik with financial support of 120,000 zloty from his partner, the landowner Keronowski, had to cease operations in the mid thirties because of financial difficulties.

Next in importance as a new industrial field reanimating the town's economy was the poduction of imitation monkey fur from sheepskin. "Furs" was the biggest factory in this field (owned by the brothers Kirzner and Mitkin).
New kinds of fur were very popular and our city became Poland's acknowledged center of fur production and dyeing, with a periodical national fur fair.

Among other such new fields there was the canning industry - fish canning, [3] chicken canning [4] and the flax carding companies [5].

As one of the ironies of destiny, this creative and exceptionally beneficial work of the Jewish businessmen, who by their enterprise, dilligence and persistence gave birth to whole new industrial fields and therefore gave needed employment to the Gentile population too, were met not with appreciation but with burgeoning antiSemitic agitation and hatred of the Jews.
In Wilno, as in other places, there were plentiful accusations that "the Jews grabbed all the industry from us" and a campaign for struggle against "Jewish domination" - all these were eagerly

---

[3] "The Baltic" Company
[4] "Mechanik and Andurski" Company
[5] the largest of which, "Standard,", was owned by Kovarski & Himmelfarb.

received. House walls in town started to bloom with calls not to buy from the Jews and "pickets" at the entrances of Jewish stores became an everyday occurrance.

Looking forward to the tragedy soon to follow, I want to say that it is my deep conviction that it is this, often successful, Jewish energy and inventiveness that was one of the principal Jewish "crimes" which the gentile population could never forgive - and this, in turn led to catastrophy for the Jews.

Coming back to our family chronicle, I should point out that our financial difficulties were mitigated by the following circumstances: simultaneous with the introduction of the new, stable currency, there was a law published regulating the pre-war debts. According to these, assuming that a ruble was equal to 2.66 zloty, for prewar obligations on promissory notes one had to pay 10%, on mortgages 20% of the original sum.
Because of this new law my father was able to collect:
1200 gold rubles (for a mortgage of 10000 rubles on Benjamin Salucki's sawmill, situated on Antokol) according to the decision of a court of arbitration. In this proceeding I took a most active part.
250 dollars from an uncle of my future wife, Hessel Shapiro, on promissory notes guaranteed by colonel Miasoyedow, who had been executed on the verdict of a military court, supposedly for espionage for the Germans.
With the cooperation of my friend Alesha Perevoski I was able to adjust the pre war 3000 zloty debt of his father, who, after signing the appropriate promissory notes promised to pay 200 zloty monthly. However, this was limited to the payment of the first installment, since the Perevoskis were hit by their next sequential catastrophe, this time not only a financial one.
The financial situation of the Perewoskis got better after the bankruptcy of 1911, just before the war when, with money inherited from his mother in law, Alesha's father had built a sawmill on the outskirts of the town (Zwierzyniec). During the crisis of 1924, the Perewoski's shared the fate of Wilno's sawmills.
The situation of the Perewoski's became tragic when, in the spring of 1925, their sawmill burned down and Alesha's father was arrested, accused of having set the fire. After Grigori Abelowicz P. succeded, after overcoming the arson accusation and being discharged from jail, to obtain the compensation for the fire losses, the fortune of the Perewoski family rose again.
Not for too long, to be sure, for the next disaster was soon upon them and Alesha, who was practicing as a physician in a small town[6] had to support his parents until his mother received an inheritance after the death in Riga of her brother, the engineer Muszkat.

Subsequently in the summer of 1925, father succeded (in partnership with the "big" Kola) to accomplish, for a fee, the sale[7] of a huge parcel of felled timber[8].

Yakov Y. Cyrinski (the brother in law of W. G Isserlin, father's partner in the export business), taking advantage of the post war upswing of the lumber industry, very soon achieved "fabulous" success.
In the beginning of the twenties Y. Cyrinski was, doubtlessly, the largest supplier of lumber building materials to the Polish government-owned railways, of

---

[6] Lachowicze (near the town of Baranowicze)

[7] (from a dense forest in Wisznewo belonging to Yakov Yefimovicz Cyrinski, the uncle of Kola's wife)

[8] to the company of Herman Klein from Riga.

the so-called "papirholz" to the cellulose factories of East Prussia and also the exporter, through the port of Danzig, of every kind (mostly sawed), lumber materials.
At the time of the financial crisis of 1925, from which Cyrinski did not come out unscathed either, he was the owner of real estate in Warsaw, Lodz, Wilno and Danzig and of a bank in the latter; in addition he owned many huge timber parcels for felling - among them the dense forest in Wisznewo mantioned before, dense forest in Nalibokach, large forest areas in Wolyn - Telikhany and Krishowin, on the properties of the Count Potocki and others. In 1926 Y. Cyrinski died from anemia in his forties. At that time medicine was still unable to combat this disease. Cyrinski even tried, unsuccessfully, the "cures" of the then popular in Warsaw "miracle worker" Oscar Woinowski from India.

After having lived in turn in almost all the capitals of West Europe, "Big" Kola had to return to Wilno in 1923 to take over the management of the Isserlin properties because of the sudden death of W.G. Isserlin, the uncle of his wife, Maria Markovna. However, by the time of my return from Germany, there was nothing left from the huge properties of the Isserlines because of the crisis in the lumber industry and inflation. Out of all the large inheritances received both by him and by his wife, the only property that remained to "Big" Kola was the apartment house on the corner of Wilenska and Mostowa streets, (in which I was born and where we lived at that time) which he owned together with his uncle, Lazar Sheniuk and the income from which (for reasons that I had already enumerated in considering the income from our apartment house) was less than modest. After my return in 1924 I got very friendly with Kola and his wife Masha - a warm and close friendship that lasted up to my marriage. Kola's lengthy residence in the European capitals made him a worldly inhabitant of the "Great world". Being a "walking encyclopedia" because of his photographic memory and exceptional linguistic abilities, Kola attracted and charmed everybody not only by his tact and his good manners, but also by his intelligence and the breadth of his knowledge of the world. His wife Mania, who had the benefit of a thorough education, had no rivals in the knowledge of both Russian and foreign literatures.

However, together with his great qualities, "Big" Kola showed character defects when forced to "fight for survival". Well provided materially from his birth on, his life did not promote in him the formation of the needed qualities of persistence, the will to overcome obstacles and even, perhaps of responsibility.
On encountering less favorable circumstances, Kola chose the path of least resistance - not insisting too strongly on his own rights, he often forgot his responsibilities too.

Despite Kola's shortcomings I got very attached to him, we were inseparable during the year and a half of our enforced idleness after my return. We would spend our days wandering around the town and Kola would recount his experiences after the outbreak of war - first in Copenhagen and Stockholm from where he supplied the Isserlins with foreign products, then in London and finally in Berlin, where at one time he owned the publishing house "Grani".

Since the financial crisis was at its height in Poland, our lives seemed to us both lacking in promise and bright horizons.
My brother David was the one who suffered the most; having fruitlessly wasted his labour during the post war years, he decided to "cut the Gordian knot" and emigrate to France, where our mother's brother, Shepsel Zeligman lived in Paris. Heavyheartedly, my father (who felt somewhat responsible for David's

interrupted medical education) had to let him go and in the summer of 1925 David went first to Belgium and soon afterwards to Paris.

In the beginning of 1926 I began working as head bookkeeper in the biggest sawmill in Wilno, owned by my mother's cousin Lazar Sheniuk.
Like all the other sawmills working for export it was standing inactive. Its engines had partial utilization as an auxiliary power station only because the municipal power station was overburdened. Its relatively powerfull engines had to use Silezian coal instead of their usual sawdust. The sawmill of L. Sheniuk, after a few very successful post war years, was experiencing great difficulties at that time.
Being deprived of capital, the company was unable to pay its dollar indebtedness, both to the Bunimowicz bank and to a whole array of private creditors.
I later learned that one of the reasons why L. Sheniuk employed me was the fact that being a man of weakly constitution, he was unable to cope with his son (my childhood friend) "little" Kola, who also worked in the business.
"Little" Kola, at that time already twice married and father of a child, though undoubtedly talented, could not get over his monomania, which made cooperation with him extremely difficult. Initially, I took over the bookkeeping (the main ledger) but shortly I in fact managed the whole plant under the guidance of Lazar S.- to "little" Kola's great displeasure.
Soon, with my active cooperation, we were able to have the plant work one shift a day, sawing round timber for the local lumber dealers.
Our most substantial customer was the father of my future wife, Gerszon Gersztein, the owner of the largest retail lumber business in town.
Besides supplying the needs of local construction, my future father-in-law was the exclusive supplier of lumber materials to the Wilno municipality.
It was in the home of G. Gersztein, while concluding a contract negotiation with him for the sawing of round timber, that I met for the first time my host's daughter, my future wife Ida.
The business of G. Gersztein obtained the needed lumber materials by sawing the round timber which they bought partly standing, partly already felled to be floated down the river Wilja to the shore of the sawmill.
By running the sawmill with the morning shift sawing lumber for other dealers, then at night working as an auxiliary power station, we started the process of restoration of the business.

But here I have to interrupt to describe some important happenings in the political life of the country and the tragedy that deeply shocked our family.
First a few words about the governmental structure of the country.
According to the constitution adopted on March 17th of 1921, Poland was declared a republic with two legislative chambers: Sejm and Senate, the members of which were chosen by its population through a general, secret vote. The legislative chambers together chose the President of the Republic, whose function as Head of State (through the endeavors of the conservative parties) was limited to choosing the Prime Minister and in time of peace the Commander of the country's armed forces.
According to the Constitution the President had no right of "Veto" in the legislative process and could dismiss the Legislature prematurely only with the agreement of both houses.
Josef Pilsudski, who performed (since the proclamation of Poland's restoration as an independent country in November of 1918) the duties of a Head of State, refused to assume the office of the weakened Presidency. Gabriel Narutowicz, the Progressive party candidate elected in his place as President on December 9th, 1922 was assassinated on the 16th of the same month by a fanatic reactionary,[9] while visiting an exposition.

---

[9] a certain Niewiadomski

The elected President, Stanislaw Wojciechowski, was overthrown in May of 1926 by Josef Pilsudski who, after a few years of complete retirement from the affairs of State, took over power with the help of the faithful to him army. This uprising was bloody since it was strongly resisted. The result of the weeklong combat on the streets of Warsaw between the government forces and the followers of Pilsudski were a few hundered dead and about a thousand wounded.
After the takeover the legislature changed the Constitution, strengethening the power of the President as Pilsudski demanded. Pilsudski again refused the offered Presidency, taking only the post of defense minister and the function of general inspector of the armed forces.
Even though the country preserved outwardly the democratic form of government, in fact after the takeover Pilsudski assumed the power of a dictator, holding the destiny of the country in his hands. This power he kept up to his death, i.e for nine years.

These political upheavals caused a great devaluation of the Polish "zloty", with the rate of exchange of a dollar rising up to nine and occasionally to ten "zloty". For the Wilno businessmen this meant an enormous rise of their indebtedness, since though their customers paid them in the devalued zloty, they had to pay their debts to private banks in dollars (they had to guarantee the unchanging rate of exchange to the lender).

Returning to my personal experiences, in the summer of 1926 I had to go through a very deep emotional crisis. Our deeply loved and respected Father had a heart attack at the relatively young age of 61 years and died on July 8th. With the death of a very dear member of our family I encountered for the first time a fact that shook me to my depths. There were deaths before, but those were other people's fathers and now the one who died was my father, whose selfless love for us made him especially dear to us. Moreover it appeared that being at that time at the very peak of my atheism I was not prepared to accept the cruel fact of passing from existence to nonexistance, from life to ashes - and what is worse this task proved beyond my powers.
Suddenly I realized that when, at a rather early age, I said good bye to the naive, primitive faith of my childhood (which had answers to every query) and became a freethinker - I did not acquire anything in exchange. I was at a silent stone wall who gave no answers to the questions which, especially in time of crisis, persistently clamored for answers: where do I find meaning and justification for my existance, where to and what for do we press on in life?
With this "dead end" feeling of perplexity there was also the agonizing awarenes that our father had "slipped out of our grasp" without affording us a chance to recompense him in the least measure for his limitless love - we had lost him forever.

My Father had died in the little town of Woronowo, (70 miles from Wilno), where my sisters Anya and Emma had gone for vacation with their children, and my Father had joined them for some rest. After being notified about my Father's death by phone at one o'clock on the night of July 8th, 1926, I immediately left for Woronowo in a rented car, and brought my Father's body home.
In Wilno (in contrast to the United States), the funeral ceremonies did not try to soften the grief of the mourners, but rather emphsized the tragedy of our loss. In compliance with tradition the deceased lay on the floor covered with a black cloth. Wax candles burned in the four corners of the room. Old men from the almshouse were lugubriously reading the psalms day and night - as long as the body remained in the house. The deceased, clothed in white shrouds, were buried in the raw earth. I remember that we protested against this custom and the rabbis permitted us, as an exception, to place my Father's body in a wooden coffin in which some holes had to be drilled.

In accordance to the custom that the close relatives of the deceased should rend their garments as indication of inconsolable mourning, over the raw grave all the members of our family had deep cuts made in our outer clothing.

During the several days long funeral ceremonies I felt turned to stone, didn't let fall a tear. The storm broke out when we came back home from the cemetary and I came face to face with the fact that, our terrible tragedy notwithstanding, the world did not even "bat an eye", everything went on in the accustomed way - the wall clock was ticking, the children wanted to go potty, the servant was cooking dinner. Becoming aware of the fragility and meaninglesness of human life in all its inexorably cruel naked breadth, I felt unpardonably affronted for my most beloved lost one and stormy, lengthy screams of protest escaped me.
I could not calm down for a long time - I could not accept the realization that "you die and it is as if you had never lived", and it wouldn't let go of me.
After a thirteen year long absence I became a very diligent, three times daily temple goer, where, in the presence of at least ten parishioners I would say the "Kadish", the traditional Jewish prayer for the dead. I did not do this to save the soul of the departed, as the religious Jews believe, but rather to honor my Father's memory and remind those around that he had once existed. Even though I had decisively left the rites of the Jewish religion ten years before, now, mourning my dead Father I strictly carried out the mourning customs of my people - for seven days I didn't wear shoes, did not shave, sat on a low bench and never left the house.
Since to accept the fact of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" was more than I could bear, during those days I realized that in the folk saying: "Happy is the believer - the world is warm for him ", there lies a lot of life's wisdom.
Here I would like to add that I did not need religion as an ethical system - my conscience was sufficient for that. However, religion which would have given me (a man eaten up by scepticism and one who demanded a logical reason for everything) a satisfactory answer to the question, "what is the reason and justification of our existence?" would have undoubtedly brightened my path in those days.

Our whole family spent the next months in inconsolable mourning.
Even though, judging from her frequent moans in her sleep the death of my Father was a very hard blow for my Mother, she bore the tragedy with great courage. The misfortune had a bad effect on the state of my sister Anya's lungs and on her doctor's advice she spent a couple of months in the mountain resort Zakopane. Father died intestate, but even though legally my Mother had the right to only one seventh of the real property she still, with her children's silent assent, continued to receive all the income from our apartment house. Since I continued to live with my mother (my sister Anya , with her husband Sasha and daughter Shela lived with us too), I had to deal with the matter of inheritance and all the financial problems. In order to pay back the obligations that my Father assumed with his guarantee of the debts of Aaron (the husband of my sister Emma), we had to take a $2000 mortgage on our house.
After my Father's death I continued my work at the L. Sheniuk's sawmill.
During the summer of 1927 my mother with my sisters Anya and Emma and their families went to Niemenczyn, a summer place 20 miles from town, situated in the midst of pine forests. The men would join them on Saturday afternoons (the work on Saturday was till one PM) and stayed until early morning Monday.

In the summer of 1927 in Niemenczyn I got acquainted with my future wife, Ida Gerstein. She was staying with her brother David whose summer house was next to ours.

Ida and I fell in love; we got married on February 23, 1928, in the apartment of the parents of the bride. We spent our honeymoon in the Polish Tatras, in the mountain resort of Zakopane.

All the members of my wife's family were characterized by their good looks. The family was composed of the Father Gershon, Mother Mera, three daughters Rachil, Vera and my wife Ida; four sons Leon (Lova), Naum, David and Samuel (Mula). The eldest daughter Rachil was regarded the most beatiful woman of our city. She was divorced from her first husband, Dr. Yacov Dayon. Her second husband, Yeremey Saulovich Cholem, was a graduate of the Kiev Commercial Institute and as the exclusive representative of the Polish Iron Syndicate was the owner of the largest (employing 60 workers) commercial enterprise in Wilno, in existence for more than a hundred years. Yeremey (Yermasha) was a passionate collector of antiques: antique furniture, china (vases, plates, figurines), gold and platinum coins and medals, gold and silver handicraft - such as ladies handbags, bracelets, snuff boxes, cigarette cases (work of Faberge, Morozow and Vena) paintings of old masters, gobelenes, oriental carpets and so on. For a wealthy collector, such as was Yeremey S., the city of Wilno and its surrounding castles of the Polish nobility offered great opportunities. Yermasha was able to acquire many beautiful and valuable objects, such as one can generally find onlyin museums.

Yermasha occupied a high social position - he was the vice president of the Wilno chamber of commerce (its president was the Pole Rucinski), and member of the presidium of United Jewish businessmen which he represented in the Tax Chamber examining the complaints of the taxpayers against the actions of the fiscal offices.

His wife, the beautiful Rachil, was a lavish spender never out of debt. She would order large quantities of expensive clothes from Mrs Miller, the town's best and most expensive dress maker and then, interestingly, she would never wear them. The marriage of Rachil and Yermasha was not a happy one - Yermasha was unfaithful to her and Rachil would not forgive him, even though to mollify her Yermasha would bring her generous gifts.

The third sister, Vera was less beautiful than Rachil and my wife Ida, but thanks to her good figure and feminine, graceful carriage she had many admirers. Vera's marriage was an arranged one, with a well to do but much older businessman from Orsha, Naum Ionych Zlatin, owner of a retail fabric business. Their age difference notwithstanding, Vera was devoted to Naum Ionych and was faithful to him, even though she was greatly admired by men. Vera dressed modestly, but with great refinement of taste and was the fashion arbiter among the idle ladies of Wilno.

Distinguished by their beauty, the three sisters were passionate lovers of beauty. Having infallible taste they, (especially Vera) were conoisseurs of harmony, blending of colors and appropriate proportions. In addition, these were natural, inborn talents, since none of the sisters (with the exception of Rachil, who lived a few years in Berlin with her first husband) had much chance to leave our provincial town and they spent the years of the German occupation in Wilno.

My wife was especially close to her sister Vera. In high school, the complete course of which they did not have time to finish because of the evacuation of Wilno by the Russian forces, the sisters were in the same grade, even though Vera was the elder by two years.

My wife's older brother Leon (Lova), a physician, lived permanently in the city of Kowno, in Lithuania. Because of Poland's occupation of Wilno, Lithuania's historic capital, Lithuania closed its frontiers and interrupted all relations with the latter, thus cutting Lova off from the family.

Lova had graduated with a gold medal from the Commercial College of Wilno in 1909 and, after having served his military service (as a volunteer he had to serve one year instead of four), he enrolled in the Medical school of the University of Halle, in Germany, where he was caught by the first World War. As a Russian citizen he was detained by the German authorities and he spent the four years of the war in relatively bearable conditions in a German military hospital.

After having received his Medical Diploma in 1919, he started to practice as a physician in the newly created, independent, democratic republic of Lithuania, initially in the city of Jurburg, subsequently in Kowno (Kaunas). Lova got married in the same year as we did, i.e. in 1928, with the very beatiful Kowno woman, Maria (Marusia) Blumental.

In 1929 Marusia was to give birth to a daughter, who by coincidence was named Perella, just as was our daughter born in the same year.

A European in his manners and cultural demands in the best meaning of this term, Lova was also distinguished and very handsome - as a couple he and the beautiful Marusia were (in the opinion of many) an ornament to any social gathering in Kowno.

Even though he had left home rather early, Lova maintained his strong attachment to his family. Notwithstanding the long separation from them, Lova continued to be the wonderfully loving and considerate son and brother, always ready to offer any sacrifice when the members of his family needed his help.

Lova was accorded the merited authority and well deserved love by the family, my wife was full of adoration for him.

My wife's other brothers - Naum, born in 1895, David, born in 1900 and Mula in 1901 all lived in Wilno and worked with their father in the lumber business. Because of the occupation of Wilno by the Germans in 1915, the only one of the brothers to achieve a high school diploma was Mula, who accomplished it after the war. Naum remained single.

David married in 1920 Mera Cynman, a young girl from Niemenczyn, and a daughter Eugenia (Zhenia) was born to them in 1923. Mula married a local Wilno girl, Nina Rabinowicz. In 1936 they had a son, Gershon (Gera).

All three brothers were tall, distinguished and very handsome, like the other members of their family.

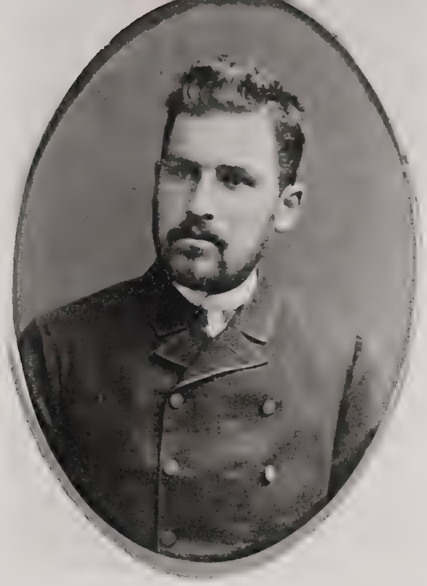
Naum was a tireless, reliable worker, very modest in his personal requirements. In his devotion to the family and his readiness for selfsacrifice he was similar to his older brother Lova.

Of the brothers living in Wilno, David had the most vivid personality.

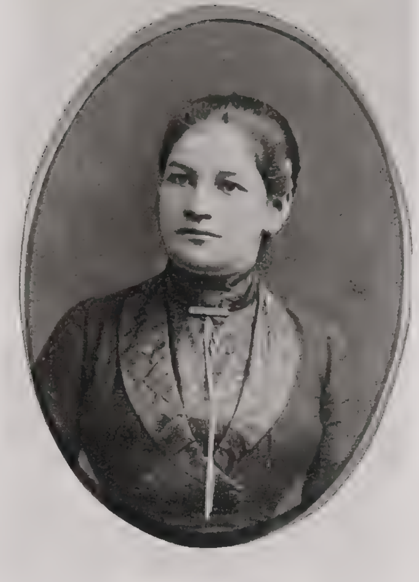
Handsome, energetic, daring and enterprising, the charming David initially revived the family lumber business. Regrettably, left without guidance after the death of their father in 1931, David was unable to bridle his desires - his passion for women (with whom he was a great favorite) and for drink. As a consequence his abilities and enterprise brought no avantage to the family business.

Mula, the youngest and the most intelligent of the brothers living in Wilno, had a pliable and less energetic personality. Throughout his life Mula needed the guidance and support of the other members of the family, initially his and subsequently his wife's.

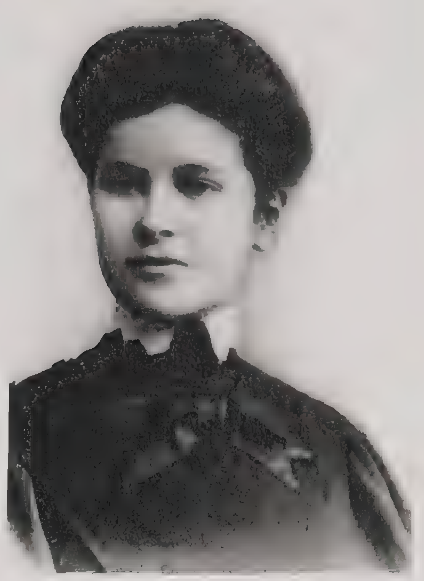
My wife's father, Gershon Gerstein, was a very devoted, loving husband and father. Throughout his life he had worked very hard to educate his children, and after they grew up, to give them a standard of living comensurate with their high ambitions - this, one has to admit, did not come easily. My father-in-law



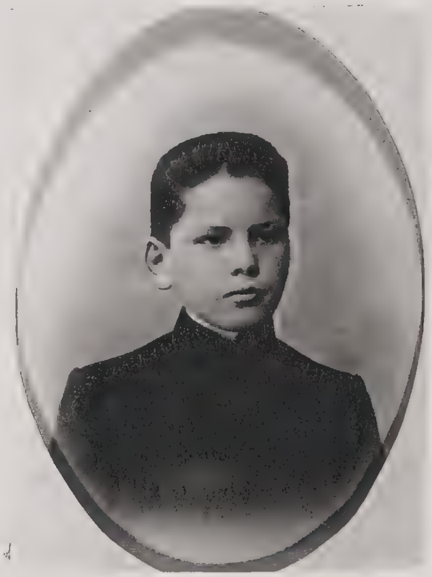
Gershon Gerstein, circa 1890



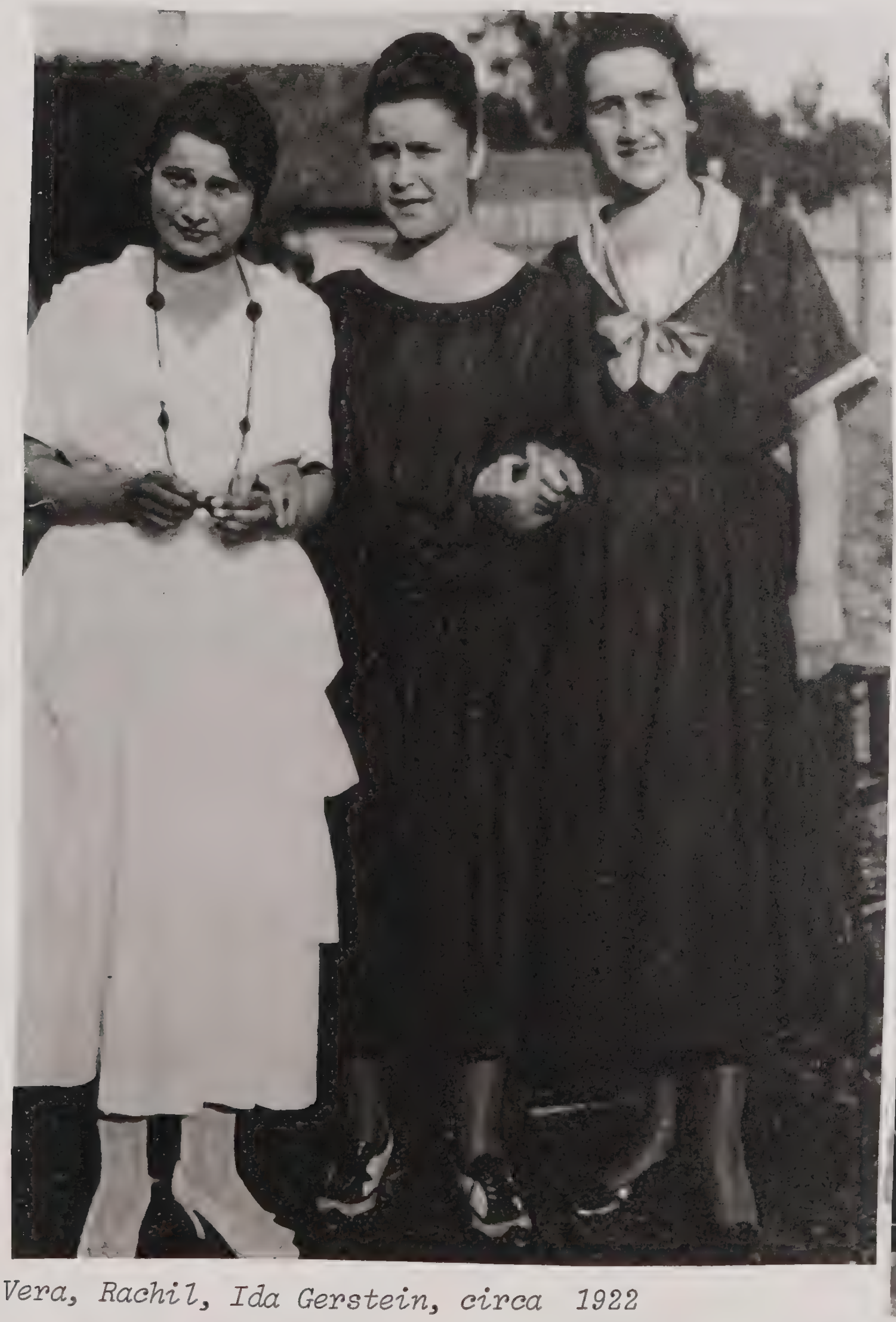
Mera Gerstein circa 1890



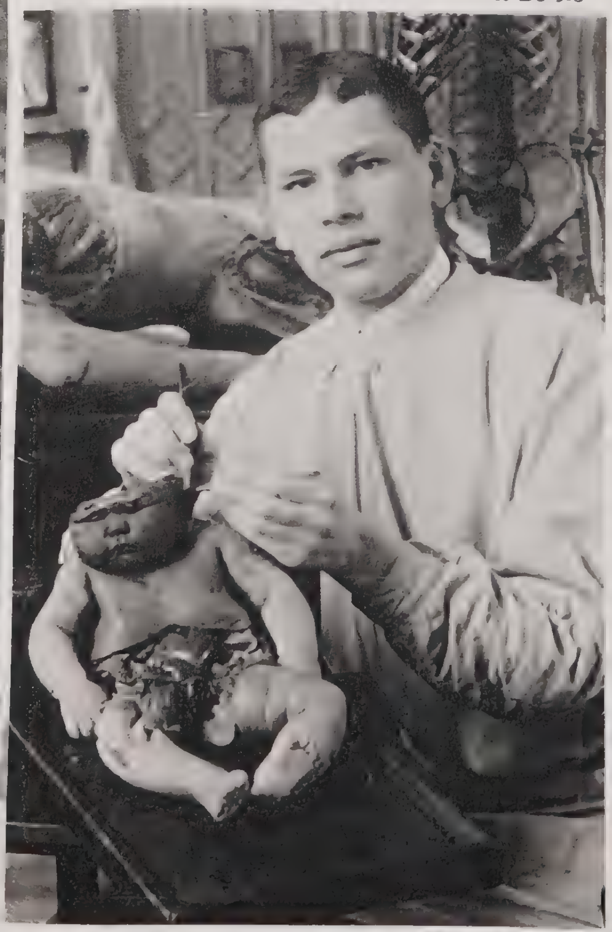
Rachil Gerstein circa 1920



Lova Gerstein circa 1903



Vera, Rachil, Ida Gerstein, circa 1922



Lova Gerstein in Medical School 19

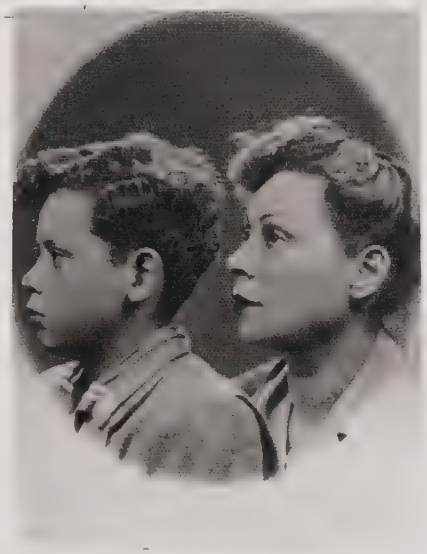
Ida Esterowicz with Perella in 1930

Zhenya Gerstein, circa 1936

Mera Gerstein circa 192

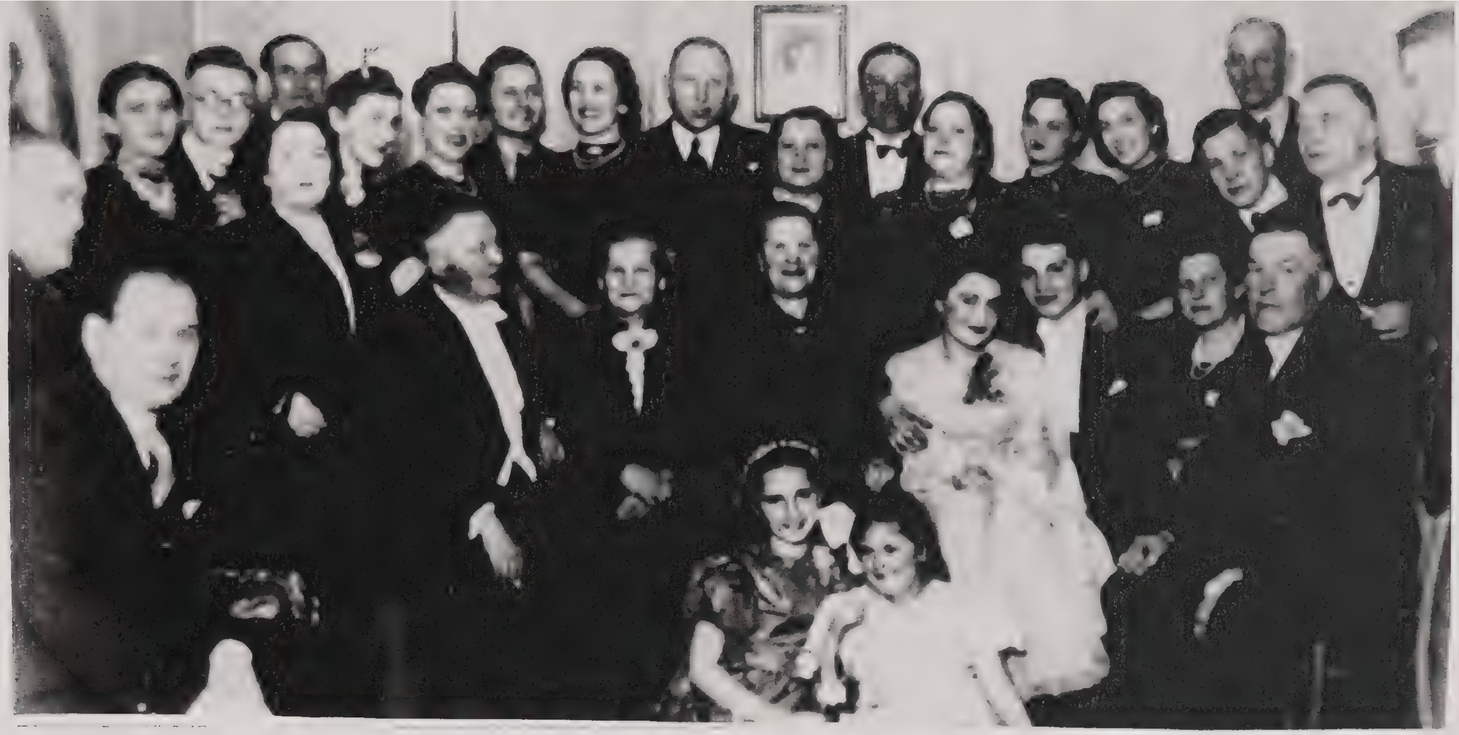
David Gerstein circa 1921

Perella Esterowicz, circa 1936



Gera, Nina Gerstein, circa 1941

Yakov Gerstein, music
choir director of Yiddis
High School
Realgymnazye



WEDDING 1938 left to right. TOP:Naum Zlatin, Betia Bielicki, Lola Shapiro Mula Gerstein, Zhenya G., Rysiek Sherman, Ida Esterowicz,Samuel E., Luba Shapiro Josia Sh.,Ola Kaplinska,Doba Sh.,Chaim Gerstein's daughter,(above,Chaim Gerstein, Misha Sh.,Mula Sh.,Sima Sh.,MIDDLE: David G.,Niuta Sh.,Zusman Sh.,Mera G.,

Sora Sh.,THE NEWLYWEDS
YASHA SHAPIRO ÷ ROSA GOLDBERG
Fania Sh.,David Sh.,BOTTOM:
Nina Sh.,Nina Kaplinska

Nochem Gerstein, 1936

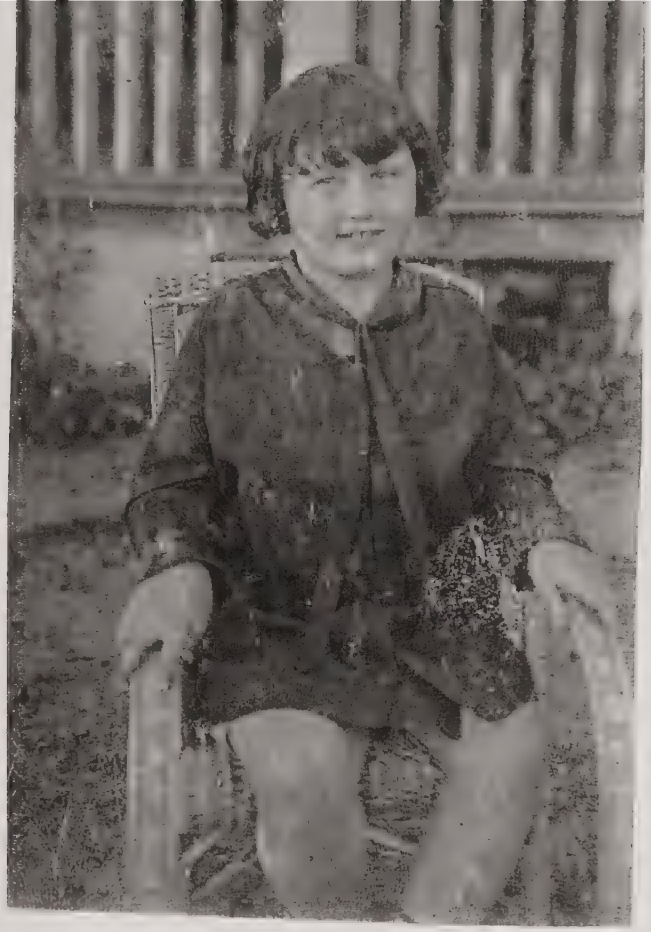
Lova Gerstein 1940

Enlargement:Ida, Samuel Esterowicz

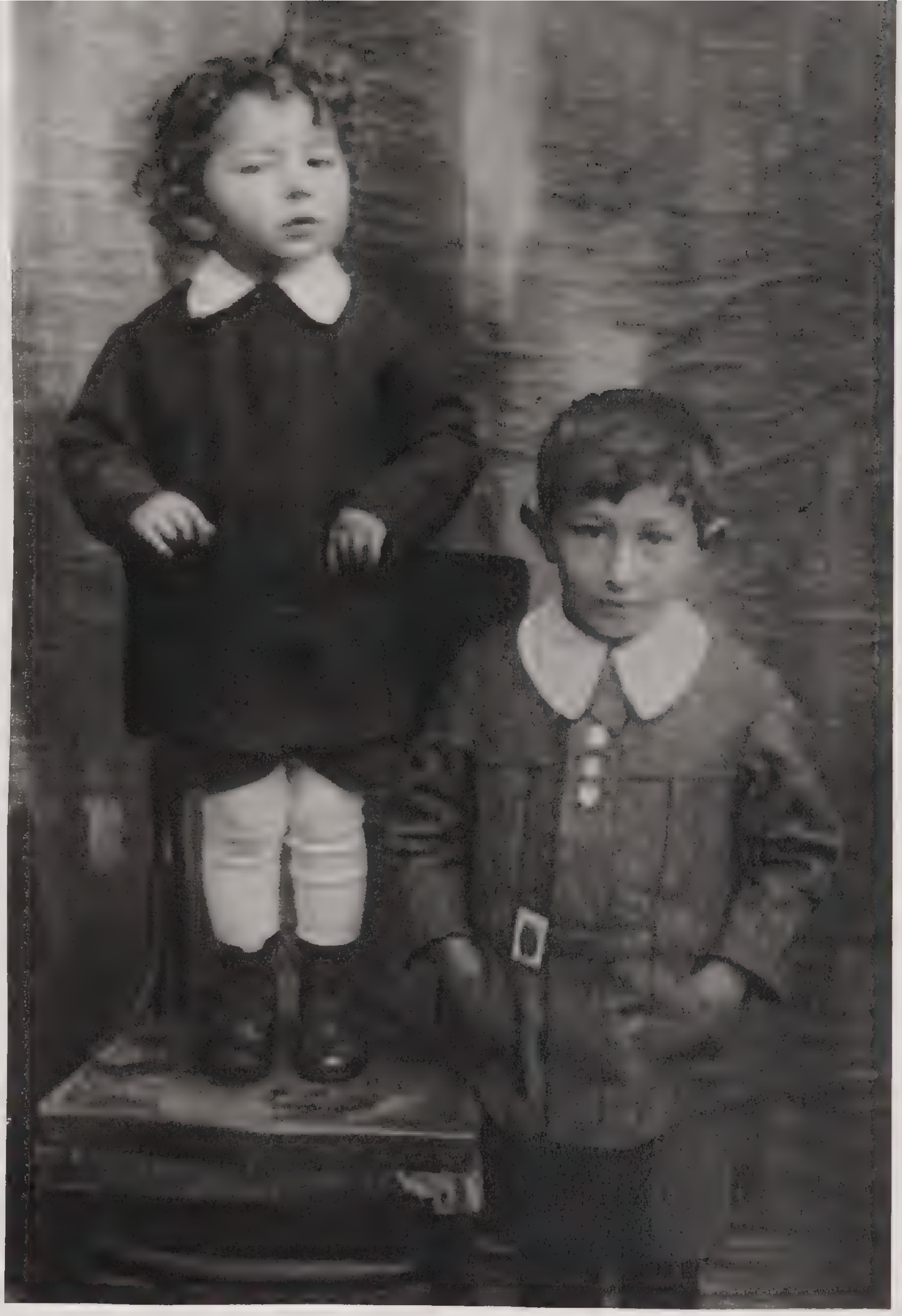
Mera Gestein, 1938

Perella Gerstein, 1940

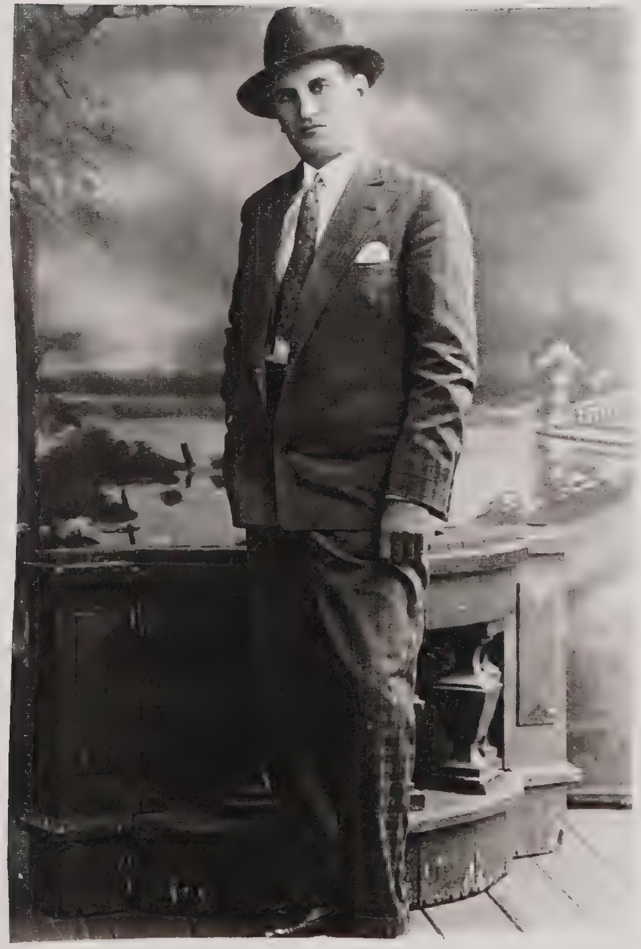
Marusia Gerstein, 1940



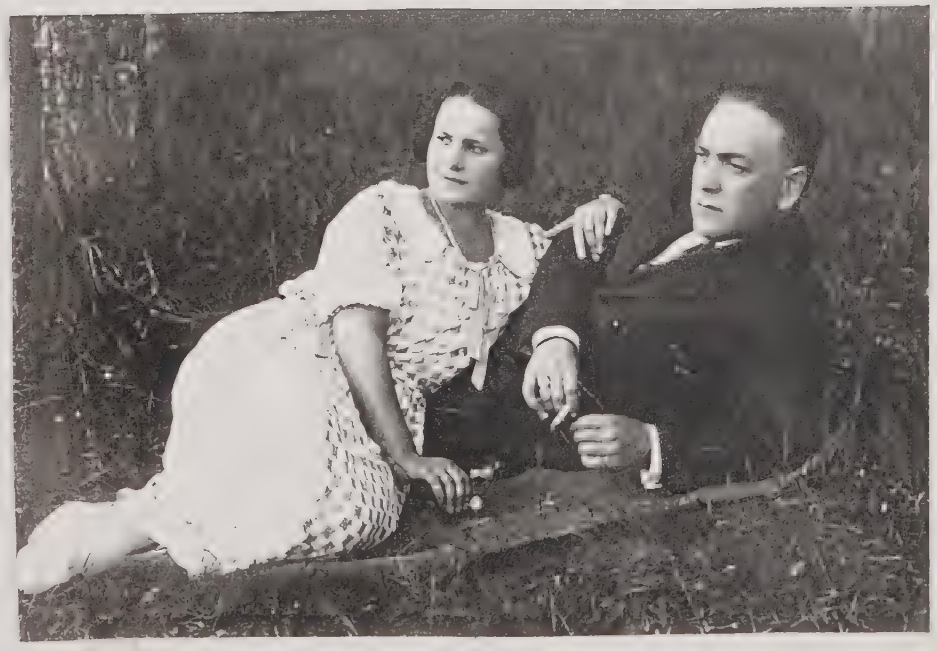
Shela Mintz, circa 1932



Motl & Vova Gdud, circa 1931



Nochem Gerstein, circa 1925



Vera, Naum Zlatin, circa 1927

was a man of a benevolent, sweet and compassionate personality. In the commercial sphere he had a reputation as not a wealthy, but a solid businessman, who prized his good name and punctually fulfilled his responsibilities.

Even though the owner of a small lumber yard on the outskirts of the town (Antokol), he nevertheless became the exclusive supplier of lumber materials for the Wilno Municipal administration. When joined after the first World War by his sons Naum and David, and having obtained in them very active helpers, my father-in-law enlarged his business, moved it to the center of town and began supplying privately owned construction businesses, even the largest ones.

As I mentioned previously, my father in law had lumber sawed at the sawmill of L. Sheniuk (which I, in effect, managed) and thus was our largest customer. This circumstance was, a we will see, important for me personally.

My wife's mother, Mera Gerstein born Meres, was a wonderful woman. With her perceptiveness, great tact and her readiness to help all who needed her, (not only those close to her), and doing it quietly and secretly, she was greatly beloved, respected and honored for her biblical virtues by the residents of Antokol where they lived before the war. Though it may be unusual between mother and son-in-law, our relationship was the warmest from the very beginning.

Speaking about my wife's family one should mention that Sara, the mother's spinster sister was permanently living with them.

Returning to my work at the sawmill I would like to mention that my boss, L. Sheniuk, fearing that as the son-in-law of G. Gerstein, (our main customer) I would not be able to defend his interests as well as I should, declared himself openly against my coming marriage.

"Munia, he told me when we were alone, since I feel that, after your father's death I should be your guardian, I feel it my duty to warn you that (taking the financial position of G. Gerstein into consideration), marrying his daughter you can not count on any dowry" (customary at that time). I answered "The question of the dowry does not concern me - it is a matter between Mr. Gerstein and his daughter".

Mr. Sheniuk's predictions were only partially true - a few months after my wedding I had to leave my position at his sawmill, but my wife received from her father the modest dowry of $2000 which, together with my own savings of $1500 I used for the purchase of lumber which I sawed into boards and exported out of the country, mainly to Germany.

The export business thus started by me was profitable initially, but my successes, as we will soon see, were short lived.

In the meanwhile, because I did not foresee the coming sharp change in my circumstances, I rented a large, luxurious apartment (which I had to restore extensively) at Mickiewicza #48, the main street. Influenced by my wife's brother-in-law Yeremey Cholem, we furnished our apartment with period furniture, some of it antique, most of which had to be restored. The ash tree dining room, built by special order in the Biedermeier style, was a gift from my wife's parents. We had excellent cabinetmakers in Wilno, (mostly Poles) experts in furniture styling.

Our daughter Perella was born on August 15th, 1929.

I would like to describe here the way we lived - a typical young middle class Jewish couple and discuss the woman's position in such a family. Immediately after our marriage our way of life was that of well-to-do, secure, even perhaps wealthy people. Besides the customary domestic servant we hired a nursmaid (a Russian woman Olga) after the birth of our daughter. During the summers of 1929 and 1930 we lived in Magistratskaya Kolonya, a summer place adjoining our city. My wife and her sisters Rachil and Vera (both childless), as well as my sisters Anya and Emma who were in more difficult financial circumstances, did not work professionally. Work was not expected from them and they were not prepared for it. The preparation of a middle class woman for assuming the role of wife and mother was limited at that time to a high school education and the study of languages - German, French and occasionally English. The striking trait of the marriages of my generation was that, as if anticipating the Hitlerian massacre, they were often childless and the rest of the couples limited themselves to one, or at most two children.

The wives of my generation expected to find a high standard of living at marriage (well furnished apartments with maids and nursemaids) but, I am sorry to say that, with few exceptions, they all led entirely idle lives. Habitually, they left the care of the household and children (if any) to the maids and nursemaids and spent their days in cafes with girlfriends and the evenings playing cards.

How their demands and way of life differed from those of our mothers who, at the beginning of their married lives were satisfied with one room with a sofa and dresser and subsequently, burdened by large families, lived exclusively for the protection of the family interests.

The circumstance that while the husbands were usually busy with the hard struggle to make a living, the wives were idle and bored, was (one has to assume) the main reason for the many divorces in our town, when the wives left their husbands and children to start a new life with other partners.

To characterize the prevailing manners I would like to mention some occurrences of our own life. To complete the picture I have to say that our financial situation took a sharp turn for the worse in 1930.

Because of the world crisis, the prices of the lumber products were halved and I had to liquidate my export business with great losses. I succeded in preserving my good reputation as businessman by paying all my obligations, but was left almost without means in the process. Entrusting the sale of the left over lumber to my brother-in-law Naum, on January 1st 1931 I took over the administration of a large cardboad factory situated 10 km. from Wilno in Nowowilejsk in the huge stone wings of a ruined by war, abandoned scythe factory.[10]

My employer, Michail Ionovitch Zlatin, (the brother of my brother-in-law), leased it from its owner, a certain Balboriski, who went bankrupt and had to give it up. My salary of 500 zloty a month was regarded as adequate at that time. Its main drawback was the fact that I had to live at the factory, coming home on Sundays only. My work in Nowowilejsk lasted six months only. Michail Zlatin had to give it up because, since we were continuing Balboriski's business, the Revenue Authorities demanded the payment of Balboriski's huge unpaid taxes from us.

The winter of 1930 - 1931 was especially hard on our family. In addition to the financial disaster and my having to live away from home our daughter fell seriously ill. She had a bladder inflammation which her physician,[11] (reputedly the best pediatrician in town) was treating incorrectly. The painful bladder irrigations (quite unneccessary, we later learned) brought Perella to

---

[10] Passel's

[11] Horatiy Osipovich Kowarski

the brink of collapse. The baby began to improve after we, upon the advice of Ida's brother Lova, changed both her treatment and physician.
Our daughter's illness was a great blow to us, especially for my wife.
Ida proved to be an exceptionally loving and devoted mother - a woman who had found herself and the meaning of life in motherhood. Ida literally did not move from Perella's side during her illness.

With the coming of spring we rented a summer house as in former years, our worsened financial situation notwithstanding. Since that year's summer house (dacha) was situated in the somewhat more distant village of Niemenczyn, I intended to visit them only briefly. I suggested then that going with the baby to the dacha, my wife should bring there the nursemaid only, leaving the servant at home to take care of the house and cook my meals. What happened next was characteristic for the customs of the time. My suggestion was hotly protested by Ida's family, especially by her sisters. In conclusion, three grown women went to the dacha to take care of one little girl and I, remaining in the city, had to board with my mother.
To be fair I have to add that, at that time, without running water, gas or electricity, the housekeeping on the dacha demanded immeasurably more effort than it does now in the United States.

My father-in-law died in November of 1931, at the age of sixty seven after a long illness. He had contracted diabetes at a relatively early age and this, together with atherosclerosis (I assume) caused the leg gangrene which eventually resulted in his death. The death of the dearly beloved father was mourned bitterly by the whole family. His son Lova came from Lithuania by a roundabout way through Riga.
After my father-in-law's death his sons took over the lumber business with its extensive clientele. Their retail business, though less affected by the fall of the lumber prices on the international market, at the time of their father's death was also experiencing financial difficulties.
Lova rescued his brothers by lending them the needed sum of $3000.
This hard earned money was never returned to Lova by his brothers.

My late father in law knew his children well, their virtues as well as their shortcomings. He foresaw that, when he will be no more his adroit, astute and self seeking son David will pose a great danger to the open, honest Naum and the helpless Mula.
"How can I protect them?" foreseeing his death he asked me more than once "David will twist them around his little finger."
Regrettably my father in law was right in his dismay, his forebodings accurate, as we will soon see.

After the termination of my work at Nowowilejsk the question of how I could make a living stood glaringly before me, demanding an immediate solution. I had no prospects in the lumber business even if the world economy should improve. Besides my subjective reasons (my lack of capital) the Wilno sawmills were dying out because of the lack of raw material which every year bacame more acute; intended for the outside market and based on round tim ber delivered on the river Wilja, 90% of the Wilno sawmills were permanently closed, their machinery rusting.

Because of my pressing needs I accepted the offer of my sister Emma's husband, Aron Moyseyevich, to join him in his business.
After the forced liquidation of his retail technical material business Aron succeeded in aquiring franchises from three large factories,

"Tudor" Co., producer of all kinds of batteries,

"Piastow" Co., producer of rubber products,

"Tungsram" Co., producer of electric light bulbs and radio tubes, i.e. the right of exclusive sale (on commission) of their products in the eastern region of Poland, from their Wilno warehouse which Aron took on the obligation of maintaining. At that time his commissions did not bring Aron enough income to cover both his household and warehouse maintenance expenses. As a result he got into debt, part of which had to be paid immediately.

According to our agreement, in exchange for my paying off of his debts and help in covering the expenses of the warehouse maintenance, Aron M. ceded to me the franchise of the "Tudor" and "Piastow" products.

Aron kept the "Tungsram" franchise for himself.

To complete the picture one should stress that by taking over these franchises I was undertaking a far from easy task: the success of the enterprise demanded much traveling - the systematic visiting of customers, the retail merchants, to obtain their orders and then their fulfillment through the writing out of waybills and expedition of merchandise. To this was added the care about replenishing the warehouse with the needed assortment of merchandise and the related correspondence with the factories.

For the delivery of the orders I had an employee in common with with Aron M. - a young man named Abram.

The customers were billed by the factories on the basis of the waybills sent by me.

The company "Tudor", with its factory in Pruszkowo near Warsaw was the largest storage battery producer - beginning with batteries for radios, cars, railroad cars and up to the big, immobile storage batteries for the municipal power station.

Since Poland was at that time at the very beginning stages of motorization (Poland with a population of 35 million had only fifty thousand cars), my biggest turnover was in radio batteries. Radios were widespread even in the villages which, deprived of electrical power, could not use them without batteries. My clients were mostly merchants and battery workshops to whom I supplied parts - from ebonite (hard rubber) vessels and lead plates to sulfuric acid - only rarely did I supply individual large users, like the Swiss "Arbon" company, an exclusive franchise whose passanger buses were cruising around town.

One of my most important customers of car batteries, Boleslaw Poddany (a Pole, originally from Poznan), the local representative of Ford Motors, was a man who would subsequently play a very important role in my life.

The factory of the "Piastow" company, also situated in Pruszkow, was originally founded by engineer Miller, a German from Koeln, the owner of the "Tudor" company, for the production of ebonite battery vessels exclusively. In 1931, by the time of my taking over of its franchise from Aron, Piastow was a huge enterprise, producing an assortment of rubber products and employing thirty thousand workers.

Among the products finding a relatively wide market in our area were varied sleeves, bicycle tires, sole and heel rubber, floor covering (a linoleum substitute) and rubberized driving belts, made from several layers of rubber-lined heavy cotton material. The latter, distinguished by their high friction coefficients and resistance to unfavorable climatic work conditions, began to displace the leather and camel hair driving belts in places where the machines were exposed to moisture, temperature etc.

I made a rather large turnover in rubberized driving belts in Bialystok, a large textile industry center in my franchise area which I would visit frequently.

My income from both franchises in this unindustrialized and most economically backward area of Poland were less than modest initially because of its low purchasing power and my unavoidable expenses of warehouse and traveling. In view of these circumstances and my wife's initial resistance notwithstanding, I sharply curtailed our household expenses. A part of our large apartment (the best two rooms) we rented out to a gentile couple named Komar. The husband, a Pole, was district attorney of the provincial court, the wife, a Russian woman from Simbirsk who got so polonized during her ten year stay in Poland that she forgot her native Russian language and sometimes needed my help in writing to her parents.

Aron M. obtained an excellent franchise (without need for storehouse) of the biggest steel foundry "Huta Pokoj". With this his economic difficulties ended, since this franchise brought him an income sufficient for a comfortable living. I took over from him the franchise of "Tungsram", a multinational corporation with its main administrative offices in Budapest, Hungary but with factories in all the European countries, even Poland. "Tungsram" was a member of a cartel which monopolized the production of electric bulbs and radioreceivers. The other members of the cartel were: the Dutch "Phillips" and the German "Osram Telefunken".
In connection with this takeover I moved the storerooms of all the three franchises (which until then were housed in my brother in law's apartment) to the newly rented premises in the center of town at 16 Zawalna street, where I also moved our household from Mickiewicza 48.

In 1934 luck smiled on me too - my income from the "Tungsram" franchise increased sharply. I call it "luck" since this change was not due to me - it happened because of circumstances completely out of my control.
As I already mentioned, I witnessed the rapid development of the radioreceiver factory "Electryt" - in Poland it was second in size to "Phillips" only. "Elektryt" produced its radioreceivers according to diagrams of the Vienna factory "Minerva" whose radioreceivers were built with the "Phillips" radiotubes (the first transistorized radios were thirty years in the future). My brother-in-law was unsuccessful in his attempts to get "Elektryt" to use the "Tungsram" radiotubes. They could not do it because "Tungsram" rating differed slightly from that of "Phillips", a member of their cartel.
Soon after my takeover of "Tungsram" from Aron M., the representatives of the three cartel members decided to standardize their output of radio tubes as to price, nomenclature and ratings. This circumstance gave me the opportunity to acquire in "Elektryt" a very big customer for Tungsram; Elektryt" began to buy radio tubes in large amounts from me.
My turnover with "Elektryt" grew prallel to its growth, so that in 1938 it reached more than one million zloty. Even though the "Tungsram" company lowered my commission gradually to 2.9% of turnover (I got 7.5% from the turnover of other clients), my income in the last years before the war was thirty thousand zloty a year from "Elektryt" alone. From all my franchises I was making about fifty thousand zloty a year in that period. Considering the general impoverishment, this was a very good income indeed. The following data can clarify the size of my income: one zloty bought five kilograms of rye bread; I paid my employees 30 - 40 zloty a week, a middle rank civil servant made 250 -300 zloty, the director of a large bank - 1000 zloty and the head director of "Tungsram" company in Warsaw - 2500 zloty a month.
My good income permitted me to enlarge the number of my employees. In additon to myself those working in my business were: Michail Grigoriew, (a

Russian) computing the goods on hand; Owsey Wapner - telephone; Aron Kagan and Nemzer - storeroom and delivery. A few years before the war I drew in my brother Yefim as a traveling salesman. I called personally upon the customers in the larger towns in my area - Bialystok, Grodno, Suwalki, Slonim and Baranowicze.

My turnover in the products of of the "Tudor" and "Piastow" companies was growing up to the beginning of the war - the "Piastow" franchise in particular was developing very successfully: it took over almost all the industrial rubber market - the competing factory "Volfram" had to close its local outlet.
According to the agreement of the electrotechnical cartel, each of its members was permitted to spend 5% of its turnover for advertising. The "Phillips" company which besides their lightbulbs and radio tubes (which in Poland was sold by "Tungsram" too) was also selling radio receivers, thus had a much larger advertising budget than "Tungsram" at its disposal. In spite of this unfavorable circumstance, in my area I made with the "Tungsram" lightbulbs and radio tubes a turnover equal to the one of "Phillips".

Looking back, I have to state that my comparative success was due in great measure to my honest and devoted service to my customers. In my work I disproved unequivocally the saying: "If you don't mislead you won't make a sale". My customers had in me a friend who did not abandon them in time of misfortune and would never "undercut them" i.e. I never offered new customers a better deal (to take them away from the competition) than I did to my old customers.

I remember two cases in particular in which, at my own risk and without reward I saved my clients from bankruptcy by both advancing them funds and vouching for them at the bank. Admittedly, these turned out to be farsighted steps - with this I retained two faithful customers, purchasers of large quantities of my merchandise.
One of them was Michal Girda, former captain of the Don Cossack regiment who at one time fought against the bolsheviks under the command of general Wrangel. He was evacuated from Russia with the White Army and returned to his native Grodno through Bulgaria. After settling in our city Girda became the owner of a accumulator repairshop as well as of two retail stores on the main street of the town, selling electrical materials, bicycles, radios and having an exclusive franchise for "Elektryt" radioreceivers. M. Girda purchased from me batteries and parts for them, also lightbulbs, radio tubes, rubber bicycle tires etc. In November of 1937, because of a conflict with the "Elektryt" company (the details of which it would be superfluous to expound here) Girda was refused delivery of radios at the height of the seasonal demand and thus got into serious financial difficulty. Learning from Girda about the threatening him bankruptcy, I immediately came to his aid: first of all I dealt with the payment of his current obligations.
As I remember, I lent him 7000 zloty from my personal funds and obtained for him from the Jewish Bank [12] (in which I was on the board of directors and member of the discount committee) a loan of 30,000 zloty (on Girda's clients' promissory notes). The repayment of this loan was guaranteed by me.
Having forestalled for the time being the threatening finacial disaster I took pains to obtain the resumption of Girda's radioreceiver supply by factory "Elektryt". This I finally achieved after lengthy negotiations with the factory's co-owner, Naum Lewin.

---

[12] Jewish Community Bank of Businessmen and Industrialists of Wilno JCBBIW

I describe this special circumstance because it was Michal Girda who gave shelter to me, my wife and daughter when, in 1944, the Red Army by liberating the town snatched us from death's door.

I would like to mention here another case from my business practices which played a decisive role in the fact that I with my wife and daughter did not share the sad destiny of the overpowering majority of the Jewish population of Wilno of seventy thousand. As I have mentioned Boleslaw Poddany was a car dealer, the exclusive representative of "Ford", "Oppel" and "Buick" cars. Poddany was purchasing from me replacement car batteries and light bulbs as well as some other products.
When my relatives, friends and acquaintances learned that in me they had the primary wholesale source of car batteries, they demanded that I should sell them the latter. This put me in a difficult situation, since if I should sell batteries from the factory storehouse directly to the consumers, who would buy from my clients, the retail merchants?
On the other hand, if I should refuse the requests of people close to me I would antagonize them - also an unacceptible to me alternative.
I finally found a solution to this difficulty - I sold them batteries at prices somewhat higher than wholesale and then every month I sent the difference (amounting to less than a hundred zloty) to Poddany, my largest customer.
On Poddany, (a Pole from Poznan, a town famed for its exceptional hatred of the Jews), who had a completely different concept of the honesty of the Jewish business people, my action made a memorable, almost stupefying impression - he became a faithful client of mine. It was Boleslaw Poddany who largely contributed to my survival during the Hitlerian cataclysm which had swallowed almost all the Jewish population of Wilno, including all my relatives.

Looking back I want to assert that my steadfast business principles not only contributed strongly to the miraculous survival of myself and my family, but also brought me financial success and with it improved standing in the community.
My business was developing swiftly and successfully. This was denoted by the fact that I won the competition in the winter of 1938 which the "Tungsram" Company arranged among all their representatives in Poland; I also won a special prize of 1500 zloty.
As I had mentioned before, I was one of the five directors and one of the three members of the discount committee of our Bank [13] where I commanded unlimited credit. Not needing capital in my business, I used this credit to help my clients, as I did with Girda, and my relatives, mine as well as my wife's.

I renewed my close friendship with Alosha then, this time it included both our families. His wife Rachel (Shela), born Epstein, herself twice a doctor - of chemistry and medicine, belonged to one of the best Jewish families in Wilno, in which wealth was combined with great culture and secular as well as religious education. Shela's father, Benjamin Markovich Epstein, after becoming deeply steeped in the Talmud graduated still in the 1890ies from the Business department of the Polytechnical Institute of Riga. Shela's Mother, Vera Vladimirovna, was born Vishniak, a family prominent in the Moscow Jewish community. Benjamin Epstein was the owner, in partnership with his brother Leon, of "Chopin", the largest brewery in the northwest part of Russia and the only one not destroyed by the Germans during the first World War.

---

[13] Jewish Community Bank of Businessmen and Industrialists of the city of Wilno,

Shela gave birth to their son Marek in 1927 in the hamlet of Lachowicze, where Alosha had his medical practice. As I have previously mentioned, Alosha moved back to Wilno with his family after the death of Shela's father, in response to her mother's insistance.

Our close friendship could continue during the summers too, since, beginning in 1933, (including 1939, the year of the outbreak of World War II) our families would spend the summers together - mostly by jointly leasing a "dacha" or staying in the same boarding house. Their son Marek was Perelochka's playmate, even though he was two years older than she.

Marochka exibited uncommon abilities at a very early age. Interested in history, as a six year old he was fascinated by the personality of Napoleon. Deeply impressed by that fantastic career and Napoleon's many victories, he was grieved by his heroe's sad ending.

Knowing that I was a lover of history, Marochka would always seek me out during our walks. He would start our talks usually with: "and now lets talk about Napoleon!". Showing an amazing knowledge of the Napoleonic epoch, Marochka would usually ask at the end of our talks, barely holding back his tears: "and why did he foolhardily go against Russia?"

Like most of the children of Wilno's leading Jewish intellectuals, he was educated at the Yiddish high school "Real Gymnasia".

Marochka was not an ephemeral "child prodigy", he was brilliant up to the end of his lamentably short life. Marochka's promise was soon extinguished when, as a concentration camp inmate he perished from hunger and unendurable slave labor in the quarries of southwestern Germany.

Alosha's wife Shela, a highly educated woman, who was fluent in all the important European languages, was the product of the best Jewish traditions in which wealth sustained the intellect instead of supplanting it.

After his return to Wilno from the hamlet Lachowicze, Alosha worked in the University's Internal Medicine clinic as the unpaid assistant of prof. Januszkiewicz (as I had already mentioned previously). Alosha was never able to establish a successful medical practice in Wilno. It was a hard sruggle for all the young, beginning physicians in Wilno at that time, but I have to admit that Alosha's abilities were rather mediocre.

Because of these circumstances and also because as a Jew he was not paid for his work at the clinic, Alosha's income in the years before the war was less than modest. The fact that to live comfortably (as they did), his income had to be supplemented in large part by Shela's income from the brewery "Chopin", hurt Alesha's pride and filled him with bitterness.

I assume these cicumstances explain the unexpected behaviour of Alosha when, after our city was occupied by the bolsheviks, he joined the small group of physicians who expressed their eagerness to collaborate with the Soviet authorities.

I would like to mention one fact here for which, I admit, I can find no sufficient explanation: it is the question of the intellectual abilities of the Jews and the Gentiles based on my experience during my life in Wilno. In high school the substantial intellectual superiority of the Jewish students in relation to their Christian (mostly Polish) associates was unquestionable.

Among the forty students graduating from high school, the six decorated prizewinners were all Jewish. However, as I look back at the postwar period, (i.e. the time when we grew up and matured) and evaluate the Jews and Gentiles who worked professionally as physicians, attorneys, engineers et cetera, I have to admit that there was very little left of the youthful Jewish superiority. Without considering the newly arrived professors of the Wilno university, the local Poles produced a series of physicians who were in no way inferior to their Jewish counterparts. In the area of jurisprudence the city's best civil law attorneys were the Jews Seifer and Zaks and the Poles Rodziewicz and Pietrusiewicz. In criminal law the Russian Pawel Andreyew was the equal of the Jew Czernichow.

SOVIET, GERMAN REALITY

Soviet, German reality, the "Red Menace"
Collectivization, life ever more intolerable
Scapegoats for failures
Business support of Hitler because of "Red Menace"
Ill fated mistake of democratic Czechoslovakia
Antisemitism in Poland strengthened by Hitler's example
Poland's suicidal foreign policy
False conviction that empires were indispensable for prosperity
Prosperity and abandonment of "laissez faire" (Keynes)
Happy marriage, prosperity
Perella's early developement
Our move to better premises on Zawalna 2
Summer vacations in Niemenczyn
Month in Paris at the International Exposition
David's difficulties there
Anya and Yefim's difficulties
Circumstances of the Gerstein family
My wife's illness
Emma so Gera's illness and death
Evaluation of Chamberlain's Munich "appeasement"
Hitler occupies Czechoslovakia
England guarantees Poland's borders (and therefore Russia's
Soviet pact with Hitler

Before turning to the description of the political life of Poland in the thirties, I feel it is essential to touch upon, even if briefly, the factors conditioning in large part our political reality: the developements taking place at that time in Poland's main neighbours, the Soviet Union and Germany.
The Soviet reality after Lenin's death in 1924 was determined by two factors: after a brief struggle between the "heirs", the absolute political power was irreversibly concentrated in the hands of Stalin; in the area of economy the Soviet authorities terminated "NEP" (instituted by Lenin), and launched with exceptional cruelty on the realization of the socialist doctrine both in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Beginning with the "dekulakization", the anihilation of the more prosperous peasants called "kulaks", with the help of the poverty stricken peasants the Soviet authorities began the so-called "collectivization" in the beginning of the thirties.
Preempting all the land belonging to the peasants as the property of the state, the authorities forced the peasants into newly formed agricultural collectives. As could be expected, the forced transformation of the small landholders into landless laborers was met by the peasants with strong resistance - this was suppressed with exceptional cruelty. A huge number of peasants paid with their lives and an even larger number was deported to the far north (the exact numbers are hardly available). The authorities succeeded in the complete liquidation of Russia's private land holdings, but at what a frightful price!
In addition to the huge loss of human lives and the agricultural catastrophy which condemned the population of the country to many years of starvation, the consequences of collectivisation are to be felt in the Soviet Union even now: they transformed Russia, which was the breadbasket

of Europe in the times of the Czar, into a country which annually has to import huge amounts of grain to feed its population.

At the same time, according to the announced five year plan, Stalin's government began to create an industrial basis for a socialist economy.
The outstanding feature of these plans was the fact that they ignored completely the pressing daily needs of the population . All of the country's resources - of labour as well as the building materials and equipment, were appropriated for the building of a mighty heavy industry.

Putting aside the question of the economic justification of these giant projects as well as the fact that through lack of coordination they were coupled with a huge waste of resources, there remains the following incontrovertible fact:
the complete and systematic disdain for the needs of the population created conditions in the country in which the acquisition of elementary human requirements, from a needle to a shelter, were an almost hopeless task for the Soviet citizen; coupled with the hunger brought by the collectivisation, the life in the Soviet Union became ever more intolerable.
Moreover, these economic failures condemned the population to more than deprivation - these sufferings were soon coupled with those of a different character.

Dismayingly, the economic debacle brought about by the actualization of the socialist doctrine did not shake in the least the blind faith of the Soviet leaders, headed by Stalin, in the infallibility of the teachings of Karl Marx.
They declared: it was not the system that was at fault (that would be unthinkable) it was some evildoers who were guilty.
As a consequence of this decision Russia plunged into a bloody nightmare which ended only on March 5th of 1953 with the death of its main inspirer.
During his absolute rule Joseph Stalin cruelly executed or deported the vast majority of the leaders of the revolution, thus eliminating those who might have made more difficult his reduction of the population to a slavishly obedient herd. Tens of millions of people were condemned to a slow and painful death in the arctic concentration camps.

However, I will not prolong the description of the horrors of this period any further. I have touched upon this topic many times before and there exists a wide literature on this theme.
Nevertheless, I have to point out that, by the complete cutting off of their population from the outside world and through artful propaganda, the Soviets were able to conceal from the world the sad results of the socialist experiment and the fact that the Marxist planned economy was entirely unable to carry out its basic function - the supplying of daily neccessities to the population.
The workers of the capitalist countries continued to look upon socialism as the only panacea for all their problems, and many regarded Moscow as their Mecca.
I remember that during the nineteen thirties a number of idealistic young people of our town, (some coming from wealthy Jewish families) illegally crossed the border into Russia, to share the tragic fate of the majority of the foreign communists, since seekers of social justice were what Stalin needed least.

In the German democratic (Weimar) republic created upon the ruins of Imperial Germany a vengeful mood was brought on by the defeat and a horrendous money inflation which pauperized the middle classes. This caused the polarization of the popular mood and the rapid growth of the radical parties - the communists on the left, and on the right, the national socialists, headed by Hitler.
The German businessmen and industrialists had the decisive word - and they supported Hitler. Amidst a world economic crisis, millions of unemployed, and a multimillion communist party in Germany, they saw in Hitler above all a dike against the bolshevik menace threatening their interests.

This "red menace" was instrumental not only in bringing Hitler to power in Germany in March of 1933; by sowing discord among the governments of the "victorious powers" it also helped Hitler to shake off the shackles of the Versailles Treaty and by rearming Germany called into being events that brought the world an ocean of tears and blood, including Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and brought dishonour to the German people for hundreds of years to come.

Speaking about Hitlers first triumphs, I have to mention two facts that also contributed to them - a little known ill fated mistake of the government of Czechoslowakia headed by Benesh and the well known suicidal foreign policy of Poland.

Poland as well as Czechoslovakia were integral parts of the "straitjacket" placed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty in order to prevent the repetition of the events of 1914: Poland cutting off East Prussia from Germany with its "corridor", Czechoslovakia's "Bohemian projection" cutting deeply into Germany from the south was a revolver held to its breast.

It should be mentioned that of all the countries created upon the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Habsburgs, Czechoslovakia was the only one in which, under the leadership of her presidents Tomas Masaryk and then Edward Benesh, the complete realization of the democratic ideals flourished in conjunction with economic prosperity.

Austria, deprived of its Slavic provinces and separated from Hungary did not adapt well to its new situation and became the hearth of upheavals - political (the assassination of its premier Dolfuss) as well as financial (the bankruptcy of the "Kreditanstalt", an event pregnant with consequences.)

The restauration of the Habsburg dynasty in both Austria and Hungary could have steadied Austria, especially in its outside political situation. Hungary demanded restauration,- in expectation of this event the head of government Admiral Hortu was nominally regarded as the temporary regent.

This project (which would have made more difficult the takeover by Hitler of the politically unsteady Austria in March of 1938 and with it the tragic encirclement of Czechoslovakia by the latter) fell through in 1936, since its realization was categorically resisted by the government of Czechoslovakia, headed by its president Benesh.

With feeling of deep hopelesness I emphasize once more the enormous input, disproportionate to their number, of the German Jewry into the economy, science and culture of Germany.

All this notwithstanding and even though the only good move in German foreign policy in the post-Bismarck period, the Rapallo Treaty with Soviet Russia, was concluded by the Jew Walter Ratenau, Hitler, who declared that all Germany's ills were caused exclusively by the Jews, came to power not through an uprising - he was voted into office by the will of the majority of the German people.

The merciless war against the Jews declared by Hitler strengthened the anti Jewish mood of chronically antiSemitic Poland. The previously described anti Jewish government practices, such as the deprivation of credit, no access to government careers or scientific work and the call to boycott Jewish enterprises were joined in the the thirties by systematic acts of violence - assault and beating, the breaking of store windows and even pogroms (Prisztyk).

I personally witnessed more than once the attacks by gangs of Polish students armed with thick staves on the Jewish members of the peaceful May 1st (Labour Day) demonstrations - this battery was committed in the presence and with tacit approval of the local police.

In contrast to the Russian students I had contact with as a student at the University of Petrograd, the majority of whom were idealistic and democratic - in search of truth and justice, also in contrast to the German students who treated me, a foreigner and a Jew, with complete tolerance and in many cases even friendship, the Polish student body was the abode of inhumanity and chauvinism. They subjected the Jewish students to all kinds of humiliations. During the lectures the Jewish students could sit only in isolated places, appointed for them by the Poles.

Gangs of hooligans were recruited from the Polish student body and through assaults provoked clashes with the Jewish youths who offered resistance in such situations.

The problem of personal safety got even more acute for the Jewish population after one of these clashes ended with the death of one of the attackers - the Polish student Waclawski. From that time on (this happened in the mid-thirties) the Polish students started the yearly celebration of the "anniversary of Waclawski's death " with weeks of assaults and battery of the Jews.

But even more serious, for Polish Jewry and even for the existance of Poland as an independant country, was Poland's foreign policy. Poland's unfavorable geopolitical situation between the two mighty powers, Germany and Russia - this, according to historians, was the cause of Poland's loss of independance in the 18th century, improved greatly after World War I. Germany as well as Russia were the vanquished and enfeebled. In addition France, the most powerful country on the European continent at that time, was very interested in the existence of a strong and independant Poland. Having lost in Russia, because of the Bolshevik takeover, an ally against Germany, France decided to substitute Poland for Russia. In connection with this important function the political borders of the resurrected Poland, pushed way beyond the ethnic ones established in Versailles by the force of her arms, were legalized by subsequent conferences in which France had a deciding voice together with Great Britain.

Allied to France by a military treaty, Poland became an integral part and buttress of the post-Versailles order on the continent, which, by depriving Germany of any chance to rearm ended the possibility of her subjugation of Europe. Poland took advantage of this favorable to her post-war political atmosphere and, aspiring to the role of a great power started to conduct an independent (even from France) foreign policy.

Thus, the Pilsudski government expelled publicly the French military mission from Warsaw and expropriated the French-owned Warsaw power station as well as the large Zirardow manufacturing complex.

In the same vein was the one sided annulment by Poland of its signature of the section of Versailles treaty fully protecting the rights of minorities - according to Poland this was a humiliation - the rights of its minorities were protected by its constitution. At the same time the Polish government continued its strong efforts to polonize the Slavic minorities, Bielorussians and Ukrainins, living inside Poland's borders; the reality of the "full rights" of the Jewish minority was described in the preceding pages.

Returning to Poland's Foreign Policy in the thirties, I would like to remark that even a superficial analysis of the European situation would show that, of the two Great Powers bordering on Poland only one, (as history has shown), could threaten its independence:

Russia was completely engrossed in the struggle with their enormous internal political and economic difficulties connected with the establishment of the Socialist Order there.

Germany, where the waves of frustration and thirst for revenge engulfing the majority of the population brought to power a government which declared as their first order of business the undoing of the territorial wrongs forced upon Germany by the Versailles Treaty.

Obviously, Germany was the one who could greatly endanger Poland's territorial integrity, if not their independence. This was clearly indicated by the fact that, of all the territorial concessions forced upon the vanquished Germany by "Versailles", the so called "corridor" which opened Poland's access to the Baltic sea, but cut off from Germany Prussia, the cradle of German militarism, was the most painful and the least acceptable.

However, analyzing Poland's Foreign Policy in the thirties we see with astonishment that its government must have come to a different conclusion. From the real events we learn that, against all reason, against the interests of their own survival and against the obligations assumed by them toward their Allies, Poland actively helped Hitler to annihilate the Versailles system which guaranteed its own existance as an independent country.

Perhaps we could explain Czechoslovakia's before mentioned error of judgement when, by refusing to accept the Habsburg Dynasty restauration in Austria and Hungary they facilitated Hitler's takeover of Austria - after all, the Habsburg era was one of centuries-long oppression by the Germans and Hungarians of the Slavic peoples.

It is almost impossible to explain the illfated Foreign Policy of the Polish government in the years leading to the Muenchen crisis. Describing the political events of this period I would like to point out that the historians of the Western world, when analysing the causes of the Allied capitulation in Muenchen, limit themselves to the enumeration of the mistakes committed by France and England. They mostly ignore the fact that the deciding factor in that encounter was the behaviour of Poland who, thanks to its geographic situation (the so called corridor) held a key strategic position in the defensive alliance against Germany. There can be no doubt that Hitler would have never decided to undertake the Czechoslovakian adventure had he not been assured of Poland's active cooperation beforehand. At the peak of the Czech crisis in the fall of 1938, Poland concentrated a part of its forces in Wolyn on the Russian border to hinder the passage of the Russian Army in case the latter should decide to come to Czechoslovakia's aid. Simultaneously, Poland attacked Czechoslovakia and occupied by force of arms the town of Cieszyn, which had a mixed Czech-Polish population.

The Soviet Union, whose foreign policy was then conducted by Maxim Litwinow declared itself ready, in cooperation with the Western Allies, to help Czechoslovakia if the latter should be attacked by Hitler.

But, Russia's willingness to cooperate notwithstanding, in evaluating the events in Muenchen, one should note in defense of Chamberlain that, taking into consideration the lack of military preparedness of England and the position taken in the conflict by Poland, he had no other choice but to acceed to all of Hitler's demands. Hitler's triumph was also facilitated by the pacifist mood of the left-leaning parties in the Western coutries and, on the other hand also by those rightist circles who saw in Hitler a defense against bolshevism.

Both called on mothers not to send their sons to die for Czechoslovakia. As we now know, those mothers paid a high price in the blood of their sons when it became clear that the destiny of the whole world was being decided in Czechoslovakia.

As far as Poland's suicidal foreign policy in that period was concerned, - it is difficult to find a precedent to it in history and Poland is paying for it even now, it should be noted that it was closely associated with its dictator - Josef Pilsudski. His heirs were his closest coworkers who, by conducting the policy of rapprochement with Poland's main enemy, Nazi Germany, were only continuing the policy initiated by Pilsudski long before he died. This policy was expressed by the signing of a non-aggression treaty between Germany and Poland; this was followed by visits to Poland of Hitler's deputy, marshall Goering, for big game hunting in the famous Bielowilerza forest with Poland's Minister of foreign affairs, colonel Beck. The results of these hunting trips and, presumably, of the friendly chats which took place there were very sad indeed: after Poland helped Hitler destroy the Versailles Treaty in September of 1938, (and with this cut off the limb it was sitting on) Hitler fell upon Poland with all his armies on September 1st, 1939, putting an end to its independence.

In the opinion of one who was living in Poland at that time and had a chance to be well acquainted with its prevailing mood, for the solving of the puzzle of Poland's illfated policy one should look, as mentioned previously, at the personality of her dictator, Josef Pilsudski - his Russo-phobia, his romanticism and his inclination, by greatly overestimating his forces to embark upon risky adventures.

Josef Pilsudski, a representative of the Polish gentry, characteristically for the latter nurtured the plan of recreating Poland's territory on their 16th century boundaries, when after their Union with Lithuania they were at the peak of their grandeur, their dominions stretched to Smolensk, included all of Ukraine and ranged from the Baltic to the Black seas.

The existance of such a plan is clearly demonstrated by the fact that, after having occupied the greater part of Bielorussia with its capital Minsk, and having no established border with Germany, in the spring of 1920 Pilsudski undertoook the (in conclusion futile) march upon and occupation of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine.

This plan had not been abandoned with the death of Pilsudski either - I remember that the call for the creation of a Poland ranging "from sea to sea" continued to resound throughout the land.

Thus it is reasonble to assume that it was Hitler's promise of help in extending her eastern borders that was the bait that lured the clique ruling Poland to their outrageous behaviour during the Muenchen crisis. Their policy, a crime against their own country, is one the Polish people are still paying for.

This attempt at clarification of the "Polish enigma" is made because its significance has not been sufficiently appreciated.

Since there exists a very voluminous literature describing the events leading to the second world war, I will limit my analysis of the events of that period to the pointing out of two facts having serious consequences of both economic and political character:

Up to the very beginning of W W II, the governments of the industrialized European powers were convinced, (mistakenly, as the post war events have shown) that a colonial empire was a factor indispensable for their prosperity.
Thus, in the latter thirties Italy embarked upon the conquest of Abissinia, provoking a break with England and France, the other two "victors of W W I" - this rupture was exploited by Hitler. This aggression confirmed the theory about the imperialist nature of capitalism, the view of Marx and Engels that capitalism must engender wars of aggression, since inevitably its unregulated economy begets systematic overproduction which pushes the capitalist countries to the securing of new markets through conquest.
It is significant to note that the above mentioned theory was refuted when the capitalist United States found markets for its industries, idled at the end of the war, not through conquest (which they could have easily achieved, having the monopoly of the Atom Bomb), but by way of raising, through the Marshall Plan , the purchasing power of the depleted countries.

Another event of that period that was pregnant with consequences, was the typical for cyclically developing capitalism sequential economic crisis which that time was exceptionally deep and lengthy.
It began in October of 1929 with the crash on the New York Stock Exchange which spread all over the capitalist world. In all the industrial countries the crisis was accompanied by shocking growth of unemployment, reaching in England two and a half, in Germany six and a half million people.
This emphasized the unacceptability for the worker of the capitalist system, at least in the aspect it was operating in at that time.

Both of the above mentioned facts were conducive to the growth in the capitalist countries of the number of people who hoped to find in Socialism, (as promised by Karl Marx) the panacea for poverty and war.
Thus many Socialist governments were elected, among them one in England headed by Ramsey MacDonald, another in France headed by Leon Blum.

In these circumstances the "Laissez Faire" capitalism of the 19th century was breathing its last gasps.
The instinct of self preservation prompted that to save itself, capitalism had to renounce the doctrine of "government non-intervention in economic life" and look for balance between capital investment and consumption through raising of the worker's wages; institute a number of welfare safeguards (social insurances) which bring greater stabilization to the cyclically developing capitalist economy.
The pressing need for government to abandon its role of passive observer and actively influence the economic life of the country by appropriate monetary and budget policy was emphasized by the famous English economist Keynes.

Returning to our familial chronicles and looking back I have to admit that, in perspective, the years immediately preceding the second World War, even though clouded by great sorrows, should be regarded as one of the happiest periods of my life.
In the context of increasing financial well being, accompanied by the improvement in our social standing, (a circumstance particularly important in the environment of a small town) my family life flowed in relative happiness.
Our mutual love and devotion smoothed out the (unavoidable in any marriage) differences of opinion about how to approach some aspects of life. In my opinion these differences were based on the fact that both in our own be-

haviour as well as in our appraisal of the conduct of others, for me the "content" was decisive; for my wife in these cases "form" was no less important. Perella tells me now that in her opinion, what I call "form" was my wife's insight into the needs and feelings of those around us.

My wife found in her motherhood almost all of life's meaning. I say "almost", since after her father's death Ida visited her mother every day, encompassing the old lady with her love and care. Our daughter Perella, after overcoming at an early age some childhood illnesses, developed very nicely both intellectually and physically. Since she was an obedient and sweet tempered child she was a great source of joy to us. It should be noted that my wife approached the questions of bringing our daughter up with both insight and intelligence. To prevent our daughter from feeling that she was in our home the center around which everything revolved (a very real danger for families with one child) my wife was able to curb her feelings and did not spoil her.

At the age of five our daughter started to attend a private coeducational Polish language school for Jewish children of Anna Pawlowna Wygocka, who after having been a pupil in Italy of Maria Montessori, used the Montessori system of teaching. Our daughter showed great intellectual aptitude in this school where she stayed until the final occupation of our city by the bolsheviks in June of 1940, although the 1939/1940 school year had to be taught in Yiddish, since the Lithuanians did not permit a Polish language school for Jewish children. The following 1940/1941 school year Perellochka attended the Russian language ten year high school named after Lenin.

Our daughter was usually taken to school by our maid, a young girl named Vera who was in our service for eight years, until we were driven to the Jewish "Ghetto" by the Lithuanian police on order of the Germans.

Vera came from the tiny town of Lachowicze, near Baranowicze. A catholic, Bielorussian by nationality, Vera spoke beside the Polish taught her in school, also a good Russian and Yiddish spoken by the Jews of her town. Vera came to us upon the recommmendation of our friends the Perewoski's in whose house she was in service while Alesha was practicing as a physician in Lachowicze. According to my wife's instructions Vera did all the housekeeping - the shopping, cooking et.c. she had our complete confidence and was treated as a family member.

Our daughter was picked up from school by her governess - during the few years before the war it was a young woman from the town Pinsk, who after taking Perella for a walk helped her with her homework.

I would like to remark upon the characteristic fact that our daughter, even though at home she heard the Russian language exclusively, (since that was the the language used by myself and my wife when talking to each other or to Vera and spoken by her nursemaid Olga) very soon began to use Polish, probably because it was the language taught in school. I remember that in eastern Europe we bestowed much more importance to the study of foreign languages at an early age then we do in the United States. Before W.W.I French was the most popular foreign language, studied by most upper and even most middle class young girls. After the war English became the greatest favorite. I do not recollect our reasons for deciding to have Perella study German as the first and English as the second language. Thus at an early age Perella was given German lessons by a Mrs Resnik, who would come to our house a few times a week. Mrs Resnik told us that Perella had great talent for languages - we could perceive that when Perella was able to recite long passages from classical German poetry by Shiller, Heine, etc. long before the age of eight.

In 1936 we moved to better premises on Zawalna 2, in a building originally built by the rich Polish landowner Slizen as a luxury town house for his own use. The apartment consisted of six large rooms besides a hallway, a huge kitchen (part of of which was partitioned out as a maid's room) and a long corridor. Only three of these rooms were occupied by our family as living quarters, the rest was used as my business premises. One huge chamber served as a combination dining and living room. To the stylized ashwood dining room set, the gift of the Gersteins, we added matching ashwood, mostly antique living room pieces. Our daughter's room had new, light blue painted furniture.

We usually spent the summers together with the Perewoski's in one of the summer resorts near to town - 1934 to1936 in Niemenczyn, in the Wazynski boardinghouse, from 1937 to 1939 in Wolokumpia in the Eliazberg place.
My wife and daughter spent the latter part of the summer of 1938 in Bulduri, at the seashore near Riga (independent Latvia at that time).
They stayed at the hotel "Adlon" together with Lydia, the wife of doctor Jedwabnik and their daughter Mira, Perellochka's classmate and best friend. The most pleasant characteristic of these adjoining seashore resorts, one which attracted many of their visitors, was the ancient pine forest which came down to the water's edge. One of the resorts, Kemmern was also famous for its sulfur baths.
My wife had many relatives in Riga - the four daughters of her father's brother Moses Gerstein lived there with their families. I met them when I spent two weeks with my family at the seashore.

It is interesting to note that, even though the Baltic states were part of the Russian empire for two hundred years, the Riga relatives spoke German to each other. Through one of destiny's ironies the Baltic Jewry continued, up to its annihilation by German fascists in 1941 - 1943, to cultivate the German language and culture on the Baltic. In my opinion it is largely due to this circumstance that the Baltic cities maintained their German character up to the second half of the twentieth century, the absence of any German population (except for some German landowning barons) notwithstanding.

During the summer of 1939 my wife with her sister Vera and Perella spent a month at the Polish resort of Ciechocinek, where I joined them for the last two weeks and where from we returned home just two weeks before the outbreak of World War Two.
Ciechocinek was situated on the railroad line connecting Gdansk (Danzig) with Warsaw. Even though the bursting to the rims with people trains from Danzig presaged the coming of the storm, on our way home, probably unwilling to acknowledge the nearness of Apocalypse, we spent a week in Warsaw.
On August 15th we celebrated the 10th birthday of Perelochka there.
The Company Tungsram put a car and driver at my disposal for the day.
I took Perelochka to the zoological garden where, I remember, she had her picture taken, sitting on a camel. Her other thrill was the endless riding up and down in the elevator of our hotel - she had never been in an elevator before.

Earler, in the summer of 1937, I spent a month in Paris at the International Exposition. My brother David, who lived in Paris since 1925, had just lost his job as bookkeeper that he had held for twelve years. As a foreigner he was the first one fired when the company had to reduce their payroll due to the continuing world crisis.
Even though France, after her large human losses in W W I and her negative population growth was in need of the foreign worker influx, her laws limited

the foreigners' chance of making a living in the country. These limitations had two approaches:
To begin with, only French citizens had the right to work - foreigners could work only after obtaining a "work permit" which had to be periodically renewed.
In addition, the government impeded the obtaining of the French citizenship by a foreigner. My brother David could not obtain French citizenship up to the very end of his life, the fact that he had lived in France for more than forty years notwithstanding.
Because of this circumstance the numerous Russian emigrants who had moved from Berlin to Paris, led in their vast majority lives of poverty and deprivation.

After my arrival in Paris, the huge traffic was the first thing that caught my attention. The moving wave of cars literally overflowed from the boulvards onto the side streets - something I have never encountered before.
The second noteworthy thing was the relatively large number of beautiful and elegant women on the streets. I should mention that this was not so when I visited Paris a second time in 1963.
Among the other impressions of a general character was the observation that the French people valued cleanliness and order much less than did the Germans. I ascertained this at the horse races in the Bois de Bologne which I visited with David. After the spectators had left the field was literally covered with the discarded papers - a thing unimaginable in Germany.
The first two weeks of my stay I mistakenly spent at the International Exposition, visiting an endless number of pavilions of almost all the countries in the world.
I realized that I was wasting too much time rather late in the visit.
With David as my guide we walked all over the center of Paris, and found many things much more worthy of my attention. I visited the Notre Dame with its chimeras, the Tuilleries, Invalides etc. I spent time in the streets and squares the names of which were so well known to me from the history of the French Revolution and from Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo and Emile Zola.
I spent two days at the Louvre where I saw, among others, the Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci and the statue of the Venus of Milos. I remember visiting an exposition of the paintings of the Spanish painter El Greco.
I also went to Versailles, where the beautifully planned parks with the profusion of fountains and the concentration in the palaces of a huge amount of paintings, gobelains , valuable furnishings and other sumptuous objects bore testimony to the fact that ascetic simplicity was foreign to the Sun King, Luis fourteenth.
I remember that in Versailles I scrupulously looked for traces of Marie Anoinette in Petit Trianon, in the setting of which, according to the novel of Stefan Zweig, the romance of the queen and the Swedish envoy Axel Fersen took place.
In the Latin Quarter I did not fail to visit the coffee houses "Rotonde" and "Cupol", the haunts of the Parisian bohemians.
Among the places of entertainment, in which as a rule women appeared in the nude, I visited the "Folie Berger", where the center of attention was the dark skinned American Josephine Baker, and the popular "Tabarin" where, I remember, Spanish dancers impressed me very much.

Looking back at that time, I remember with some satisfaction that I had completely ignored the Parisian "specialty" - the enterprises which gave Paris its sad reputation by showing acts of all kinds of sexual perversions - usually much frequented by foreigners.

I took leave from David with tears in my eyes. David's financial situation was not enviable - to avoid starvation he was selling objects on the Parisian markets. Upon my return home I started to send David 100 zloty a month. Since Poland had currency outflow limitations I made arrangements with the daughter of W.G. Isserlin, Frieda, who lived in Paris at that time. She would pay David the amount I paid her mother in Wilno. I should mention that in addition to my brother David, my sister Anya and, as always, my brother Yefim were also in financial difficulties.

After my marriage Anya continued to live with our mother in our prewar apartment on Wilenska 39 with her husband Sasha and daughter Shela. In 1935 they all moved to our own house on Wilkomierska 28; my brother Yefim had always lived there and my sister Emma had also moved there with her family.

The income of my brother in law Sasha, who became an insurance agent after moving from Bialystok to Wilno, was insufficient for even the modest life they led; to make ends meet Sasha had to take out bank loans which I had to guarantee. In 1938, when his bank debt reached the sum of 3500 zloty, my sister Anya called upon me requesting that I should settle it, which I did. In exchange proud Anya transferred to me half of her share of our inherited apartment house. This gesture had no practical meaning since all the income from that house went to my mother.

To end Yefim's constant monetary troubles I employed him in my business as a traveling salesman in 1937.

My brother David visited us in 1937. The Muenchen crisis forced him to hurry back to Paris in September of that year. Since the chances of David's making a living in France were rather remote, I started to consider making a place for him in my business. I remember going to Warsaw in connection with this to check out the possibility of establishing a bicycle parts outlet as part of my business.

However, the occupation of Prague by Germany on March 15th, 1939, caused a sharp deterioration of relations between Poland and Germany and even the subsequent partial mobilization of Polish military forces; it put a stop to any thought of enlarging my business.

My wife's sisters were both well off during that period. Vera's husband Naum Zlatin was making a very good living as the Wilno representative of "Naum Etingen", the very successful biggest Lodz manufacturer of cotton fabrics.

Yeremey Saulovitch Cholem, the husband of my wife's other sister, Rachil, was the owner of Wilno's largest commercial enterprise which was given by the Syndicate the exclusive representation of iron products in the Wilno area. Yermasha was drawing from the business the huge (for that time) monthly sum of 5000 zloty - this allowed the Cholem's to lead an opulent, even if disorganized life.

The financial conditions of Ida's mother and brothers who continued to manage the retail lumber business they inherited turned out very differently. Regrettably, my father in law's fears that, after his own death, his son David would put the other family members in jeopardy turned out to be only too well founded. My wife's brother David doubtlessly had enlarged and enlivened the business after his father's demise with his spirit of enterprise, his adroitness and ability to inspire liking. However, by simultaneous systematical withdrawal of large sums of money from the business "for expenses to be accounted for subsequently" and for which he had never given account, since in reality he spent it all on women and partying, David brought the business to bankruptcy. In 1938 the business was forced to stop payments of obligations;

the victims of this were mainly their relatives and friends, those who were trying to assist them; brother Lova lost $ 3000, Yermasha $ 12000 and I 3500 zloty - just to mention a few. This circumstance permitted my wife's brothers to carry on the business, since almost none of the creditors had tried to force through the courts the restitution of money owed them.

As I have mentioned before, the years before the second World War, which brought me financial success, strengthened my social position and gave me the satisfaction of being able to assist those who were close to my heart, were darkened by great sorrows.
My wife fell very ill in the fall of 1935. My friend Alesha who was her physician was not able to diagnose her disease. In addition, after he succeded in lowering her temperature, the illness was complicated by the inflammation of the eye iris (iritis) in both eyes - this in turn provoked another, very serious illness - glaucoma. Glaucoma, which builds high pressure in the eye, leads if not corrected to the optic nerve atrophy and blindness.
Doctor Rucznik, an ophtalmologist I consulted said that since the glaucoma was caused by the inflammation of the iris (iritis), it was imperative to establish the etiology of the latter - iritis is mostly caused by tuberculosis or syphylis. To rule out the latter they had to perform the Wasserman test on my blood. I remember that I had lived through nerveracking forty eight hours before receiving the negative "Wasserman" test result. This intensified the suspicion that my wife was suffering from a covert form of tuberculosis.
My wife's glaucoma did not respond to the clinical treatment with "Pilocarpine" drops, surgery was crucial for the preservation of Ida's sight. The surgery consisted of a trepanation of the eyeball to let out the collected liquid pressing on the optic nerve.
The surgery, though not life threatening, did not always give positive results. The requirement for the surgery was confirmed by the professor of the Wilno University, Ignacy Abramowicz.
However, before going ahead with the surgery, we decided to consult Doctor Pines, an ophtalmologist famous in Poland at that time. To accomplish this my wife and I left for Warsaw immediately. "Where did she contract it ? " inquired Dr Pines privately after the examination. "She obviously has tuberculosis."
Doctor Pines diagnosis appeared to have been mistaken. The surgery performed by Dr. Abramowicz on the left eye lowered the pressure in both eyes to normal. In connection with the suspicion that she had insidious tuberculosis, my wife, after a course of antitubercular injections, at the end of 1935 went for a couple of months to the mountain resort Zakopane. I joined her there for a short time in February of 1936. In this fairyland setting, with the background of blindingly white, sunlit mountains we spent some vivid, unforgattable days. I remember that we realized then that we were both unable to live "for the present" - even the most joyous moments were clouded for us by our worries about the future.
We have kept this way of life in all the years that followed. Here I would like to note that if we had to live our lives over again, I doubt whether I would change this lifestyle which, even though depriving us of carefree days, preserved us from sleepless, worried nights.

Gerochka (Gershon), the twenty year old only son of my siser Emma died on March 21st 1938, after a short illness.
The death of Gerochka, the oldest grandson and beloved by us all shocked our whole family deeply. It was like thunder from a clear sky.
We couldn't suspect then the horrors that were awaiting us in the near future.
Gerochka, the knight and defender of his one year younger sister, Evochka,

was unique in the great nobility of his character, inherited from his mother Emma. Needless to say, Emma adored him and was proud of him. Gerochka had scarlet fever in 1927; this was complicated by endocarditis, (inflammation of the heart's inner lining) from which he recovered for the time being, though apparently only temporarily.

When Gerochka graduated from the Polish gymnasium (high school), Aron M. and Emma, who by that time were much better off financially, decided to send him out of the country to acquire his higher education, in order to shield him from the humiliations to which Jewish students were subjected at the Polish universities. In the fall of 1937 Gerochka went to Belgium where he enrolled at the Commercial Institute of Antverpen. However, he had to return home unexpectedly in December feeling unwell because of a prolonged fever.

After his arrival Gerochka went for a checkup at the university clinic where Alosha worked as assistant professor.

We spent the New Year's Eve of 1938 at our house with Alosha and his wife Shela. It was then that Alosha gave me the fatal news that Gerochka's blood test showed the presence of Streptococus hemoliticus, a bacterium against which medical science had no successful means of treatment. This bacterium reawakened the inflammatory process in Gerochka's heart and he was dying.

I don't rememember how Emma got to know this horrifying truth about her only son. However this most cruel blow that destiny could inflict upon her was met by Emma with exceptional courage and self-control.

I want to emphasize that, during the ensuing tragedy the character of my sister Emma was delineated for the first time in its entirety.

This was a woman of unusual spiritual and moral strength, an infinitely loving mother prepared for the greatest self-sacrifice. Learning that there was no hope for Gera she did not seek the support of her husband - to the contrary, she hid the truth from him; she moved into the clinic to spend days and nights with her son trying to ease and embellish his last days.

Only the very heights of love and readiness for self-sacrifice could endow Emma with the strength, instead of tearing her hair out in impotent desperation, to entertain her son for two and a half months by telling him funny stories and making plans about the places they would visit after he got well - smiling all the time. "We should be kissing her footprints" said my friend Alosha, who at the clinic saw Emma walk her thorny path.

To watch Emma crucified, but smiling, was more than I could stand.

Out of the feeling of impotence, I have to admit that cravenly I ran away. I went for two weeks to the resort Krynica to take baths, but also at the same time to take me away from the unbearable.

The town was sunny but for us everything was weeping around us, when we buried Gerochka on the first day of spring, March 22nd, 1938.

I would like to note that just a few years later the application of the antibiotic penicillin, discovered previously by the English bacteriologist Alexander Fleming, brought the successful treatment of the disease that took Gerochka to his untimely grave.

I am ending these phrases with the feeling of uncertainty whether I was able to paint Emma as she ought to be - a martyr and really a saint.

In the meantime the world and the European Jewry in particular was moving closer to a cataclysm the dimensions of which it was impossible to foresee, since only a sick, maddened phantasy could paint the bloody nightmare that would engulf us.

I have previously described briefly the Czechoslovak drama of the fall of 1938, while discussing Poland's role in it. In connection with this I want to reiterate that it is hard to agree with the historians who accuse Chamberlain of undue apeasement at the time of Muenchen, apparently assuming that he had other choices.

However, even without mentioning Poland, one has to admit that actually the Allies could do nothing else but capitulate - that was what Muenchen was, in reality, since they had neither the material means (the military forces) nor the spiritual resources (the preparedness for great sacrifices).

In England the personalities in power at the time could easily accept the growth of power of Nazi Germany, since they thought of it as a barrier defending them against the Red peril - moreover, the country's defense forces were badly neglected anyway.

In exsanguinated by war France whose population was diminishing because of negative growth, the pacifist propoganda found very fertile soil.

The following fact, recounted by my brother David who visited me from Paris in 1938 is indicative of the mood prevailing in France at the time. The general teacher's conference held in that year in France rejected the resolution of the conservative wing of the French socialist party, headed by Leon Blum, calling on the French people to defend their country in case of necessity. The resolution of the left wing of the socialist party, headed by Faure, was adopted - it declared that any kind of slavery was preferable to war.

The winter of 1938 - 1939 went by without many changes, except that the evening battery of Jews became more frequent.

The pre-holiday season sales were exceptionally successful and thus my income went up considerably.

However, (as one should have expected) the fatal results of Poland's irrational foreign policy could soon be observed.

On March 15th, 1939 Hitler took over Prague and occupied the whole of Czechoslovakia, in spite of his Muenchen guarantees.

Two weeks had not elapsed before the Polish foreign minister Beck knew he had to fly to London to ask for protection in case of attack of her former ally, Germany. England, who by that time had no doubts about Hitler's aims and intentions, immediately guaranteed the security of Poland's western borders, i.e. her borders with Germany.

Since Poland's location was separating Russia from Germany, to attack Russia Germany would have to infringe upon Poland's borders; therefore, by guaranteeing Poland's western borders England was simultaneously guaranteeing the western borders of Russia .

I stress this fact since it, by baring the distortions of Soviet propoganda, will assist in establishing the true motives of Stalin's ensuing perfidious foreign policy.

The relations between Poland and Germany deteriorated to such an extent by that time that simultaneously to the London negotiations Poland found she had to partially mobilize her armed forces as early as April of 1939.

This mobilization had a bad effect on the economy of the country. It disturbed the credit - commodity transfer and caused financial difficulties to many of my customers, among them my most important customer, the radio receiver factory "Electryt".

Returning to the chronological description of the political events of this period, one should mention that the negotiations between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union (initiated after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany) regarding the common military action to be undertaken in case of renewed German aggression, ran into great difficulties because of Poland's categorical refusal to grant passage through its territories to Soviet forces meant for action against Germany.

Unexpectedly, in May of 1939 there was a declaration of a change in the composition of the Soviet government. Maxim Litvinov, the Foreign Affairs Comissar was retired, replaced by Viacheslav Molotov.

The democracies didn't suspect that the departure of Litwinow who was carrying out an anti-Hitler policy in conjunction with the Western Powers was related to the total alteration of the Soviet foreign policy: the Moscow Politburo, headed by Stalin decided to accept Hitler's proposal of a Soviet German alliance against the democracies.

In contrast to the public negotiations which the Soviets were carrying on with the Western Powers, the simultaneous negotiations with Germany were highly secret; when on August 22nd, 1939 Moscow and Berlin declared that next day, on August 23rd the German foreign minister Ribbentrop and Molotov were going to sign a non-aggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany, it acted like an unexpected bomb explosion.
The official text of the treaty was supplemented with a secret agreement which planned the forcible dismemberment of Poland and the division of the spoils between Germany and the Soviet Union.
In addition, in exchange for the Soviet Union's neutrality in case of war between Germany and the Western Powers, Germany agreed to the annexation by the Soviet Union of the part of Finland bordering on Leningrad, of the Bessarabian region which was given to Rumania after the first World War and of the three Baltic republics which received their independence at the same time - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Analyzing the reasons why Hitler and Stalin, mortal enemies just the day before, decided to sign the August 23rd, 1939 friendship treaty, they were obvious as far as Germany was concerned.
To Nazi Germany, who decided to repeat the attempt of subjugation of Europe, the lessons of the first World War were clear: there was no chance of success for simultaneous combat on two fronts.
Because of these circumstances, since England and France refused categorically to remain neutral in case of Germany's attack on Russia, the treaty assuring Russia's neutrality in case of war between the Western Allies and Germany conformed to vital interests of the latter.
One should note that subsequent events wholly corroborated these truths.
The above mentioned position of the Allies during the pre war period indicated that they thought Hitler stronger militarily than the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, the Allies would have agreed to stay neutral if they had regarded Stalin as stronger than Hitler or even as equally strong. In the first case this would bring the destruction of Nazism, in the other the mutual annihilation of both Nazism and Communism - both results quite acceptable to the Allies.
But it would be tantamount to suicide to let Hitler liquidate the second front unopposed, take possesion of the Russian raw materials and then attack the West with redoubled strength.
One should note here that as if to confirm this opinion of the Allies, the Red Army demonstrated for the whole world its exceptionally low fighting capabilities when, during the winter of 1939-40' tiny Finland forced the attacking Russian colossus to pay for every step forward with hundreds of thousands of killed and wounded - inflicting thus a terrible setback upon Russia.

But what were Stalin's calculations when, by signing the treaty, he untied Hitler's hands and, (after jointly destroying Poland's resistance) by delivering to Germany the needed raw materials, petroleum and victuals Stalin helped Hitler to liquidate the second front, (subsequently of desperate importance to Russia) all actions that would bring Russia to the brink of annihilation?
In my conversations with communists and their supporters I often heard the opinion that Stalin was forced to come to terms with Hitler to prevent the latter's attack on Russia, which was supposedly urged by the Allies.
In addition to the fact that such Allied move would be contrary to their own cardinal interests, as we have seen, this tale is refuted by the fact that in April of 1939 the Allies had guaranteed the western borders of Poland, situated between Russia and Germany, thus giving notice to Hitler that his first step eastward would provoke a war that would engulf all of Europe.

In view of inaccessibility of official sources, since the Kremlin archives are closed to outsiders, to solve the riddle of what could be the circumstances which had inspired Stalin to take the steps whose consequences were fatal to Russia, we have to take recourse in inductive analysis. The result of the latter tells us that the only thought that could inspire Stalin to " unfetter Hitler" would be the conviction that there was a balance of military power between Hitler and the Allies, since in that case Stalin could foresee the repetition of the first World War tragedy, i.e.

the mutual destruction of the adversaries which would give the communists the chance of raising the red flag over Europe without impediment - even though it would be a ruined Europe covered with blood and corpses.

Judging from his actions Stalin must have actually thought Hitler the weaker - to reestablish the balance of power, so tempting with its promise of easy communist take-over, he willingly supplied (in many cases by air) the industrial raw materials, petroleum and grain needed by Hitler.

These plans of the "Great" Stalin which, as we have seen, were not inspired by abundant love of humanity were, as subsequent events have shown, most certainly not sagacious either.

Russia has paid for them with thirty million corpses and the ruin of its finest regions.

Russia was saved from complete destruction by a circumstance that Stalin could not have foreseen - the uprising of general Simowich in Yugoslavia which forced Hitler to delay his attack on Russia (campaign Barbarossa) from the 15th of May to June 22nd of 1941. But we should not rush too far ahead.

As far as our personal lives were concerned, looking back it seems that we were strangely optimistic in that summer of 1939. Even though ever more dark clouds were looming on the horizon, we continued to hope that we might avoid the storm. Life was flowing in its usual fashion: as in previous years we had started the summer in the Eliazberg boarding house in Wolokumpia from where my wife and daughter went for a month to Ciechocinek as I have already mentioned before. I joined them there in the beginning of August. We came back to Wolokumpia (with a stopover in Warsaw) two weeks before the war broke out.

When on the 22nd of August it was annonced that Ribbentrop was going to Moscow, I did not leave town any more.

Since I had no doubt that war was unavoidable I spent a completely sleepless night. I remember that early the next morning, while the town was still asleep, I hurried to the neighbourhood food store and there without difficulty purchased large quantities of all kinds of non perishable provisions.

I did it just in time, since a couple of hours later when the Polish government announced the general mobilization of its armed forces all the people ran to the stores crowding without much success - most foodstuff was already sold or hoarded by the shopkeepers. Next day, August 24th, we moved back to town, as did all the other patrons.

As I recall, just the day before I said farewell to doctor Dawid Jedwabnik, his wife Lydia and daughter Mira who were going to the International Exposition in New York. Mira was Perella's classmate and best friend.

VOLUME

II

MEMOIRS

of

SAMUEL ESTEROWICZ

in collaboration

with

PEARL ESTEROWICZ GOOD

memoirs translated from Russian
and edited by
Pearl Esterowicz Good

WORLD WAR II breaks out

Hitler attacks Poland
Wilno is bombed
Soviet tank crashes across the street from our house, night of shooting
Wilno is occupied by the Soviets, arrest of many people
Great difference in Russian people
Wilno is handed over to democratic Lithuania
Jewish refugees stream into Wilno
Description of Lithuania
Stalin realizes his mistake
Occupation of Lithuania by the Soviets
Arrests and deportations
I am sure that Hitler would attack Russia immediately

The second World War broke out on the night of August 31st, 1939, with the shelling by a German gunboat of the Polish island of Westerplatte which guarded the approach to the port city of Gdansk (Danzig) from the sea. Slightly later, still before dawn on September 1st, the German armies invaded Poland.

The guarantee of Poland's western borders, solemnly announced by Chamberlain to the Parliament in April of 1939 and corroborated by the August 25th aid treaty, was not acted upon for a few days. England as well as France declared war on Germany after a delay of three days. They were even less eager to initiate military action against Germany. In this case a mountain gave birth to a mouse - Poland was left alone, unaided and the unequal strife between her and Germany was soon over.

Against the mechanized German armies with its thousands of tanks and mighty military aviation, Poland with its horse drawn transport could only put forth the bravery of her soldiers.
The combined attacks of the diving bombers ("Messerscmidt") and the large tank units, sweeping everything before them opened the way for the fast moving German motorized infantry divisions.
The madly brave suicidal sorties of the Polish Ulans who threw themselves against the German tanks with their lances could not avert the inevitable - seven days after the initiation of hostilities the Germans were approaching Warsaw, the Polish capital.
The Polish government had already left the capital and moved to Lublin the day before. From there, they managed to reach England through Rumania and established the Polish Government in Exile in London.

Warsaw, surrounded by the Germans and subjected to cruel bombardement which caused huge fires and massive destruction was still resisting for more than two weeks with the heroic participation of her civilian population. Even later, after the Polish resistance had stopped, I remember that on the wavelength of the Warsaw broadcasting station we heard the fiery voice of the organizer of the defense, major Starzynski, Warsaw's mayor, urging the population of the capital not to lay down their arms.

Even though we were situated far in the hinterland, the Germans bombed our city a few times every day. The approach of the enemy planes was signaled to the population by the sound of sirens as well as on the radio. We would hurry to our basement which served as air raid shelter, taking with us a

suitcase containing our money, valuables and jewelry. Most of the time the German bombs did not fall on military targets but on civilian homes, causing some loss of life. On September 1st in the suburb of Poplaw a German bomb killed the thirteen year old Alesha Lipski, the son of our acquaintance Vladimir Lipski .

From that period I remember that the National Bank had supplied the private banks with the needed amounts of Polish zloty so that they were able to pay out all the accounts in their entirety; this gave me the chance to obtain my deposit of 20,000 zloty from the bank in which I was a member of the board of directors.

Before the coming of the Reds, upon my wife's sister Rachil's request I used part of this cash to satisfy the demand of the Municipal Pawnhouse and buy out some of the jewels Rachil had pawned there. As I have remarked before, Rachil was in constant need of money - she spent it on gorgeous clothes which, amazingly, she almost never wore. The valuables I redeemed consisted of a one and a half carat diamond ring, a platinum watch covered with small diamonds and four antique gold bracelets, ornamented with enamel. I mention this because it seems that these jewels, which soon could have been very useful to us, were unlucky - subsequently, they were all lost on different occasions .

At that time refugees, (mostly Jewish) began to stream into Wilno. They had abandoned their homes upon the approach of the Germans - whole families or just the men ran east.

On September 18th, 1939 Wilno was occupied by Soviet forces in accordance with the "Ribbentrop - Molotow agreement" which anticipated the partition of Poland between Russia and Germany.

One day previously a single reconnoitering Soviet tank did not encounter any resistance and got all the way into the center of the city. Having run into a single story building across the street from our house and not being able to move from there, the tank crew began a disorganized shelling of the surrounding houses, including ours. To our amazement and horror shrapnel fragments began to pierce all the seven street-fronting windows of our apartment, this forced us to drop face - down to the floor and crawl to the rear rooms. The shelling continued till the Polish soldiers, with whom the town was brimming, clambered upon the roof of the house against which the tank was stuck, poured gasoline on it and set it afire. Thus the ill starred Russian tank crew was burned alive.

The main forces of the Red Army entered our city at dawn of the following day. We were impressed by its huge amount of tanks - the Polish army had almost none. One should note, however that the Red tanks were not very efficient - some of them got stuck before reaching their intended object. The untidiness of the soldiers' outfits was also striking, their worn out uniforms, illfitting and frayed. Their clothing bore the imprint of great penury, the complete lack of indispensable articles prevailing in the Soviet Union at that time.

Immediately after their seizure of the city the Red authorities announced the mandatory registration of all Polish army officers.

All of them (among them two Jewish physicians, one Doctor of Stomatology, Felix Hanek Bloch, a friend of ours) were deported deep into Russia. These physicians were never seen again. Everything speaks for the assumption that they had shared the tragic fate of the tens of thousands of Polish officers who, after having been imprisoned by the Russians, were shot by the Soviet N.K.V.D. in the Katyn forest near Smolensk in July of 1941, before the Soviets retreated.

The Soviet authorities announced after the occupation of the city that the economic life was to go on upon previously established conditions, it was strictly forbidden to raise the prices of merchandise and that the Soviet ruble was to be equivalent to the Polish zloty.
Thereupon the merchants who were my clients besieged my business so that after a couple of days there did not remain a lightbulb in my storeroom.

Immediately after their coming the Soviets evinced strong interest in the radioreceiver factory Elektryt which, as noted before, I supplied with radiotubes Tungsram from my agency storeroom; Elektryt used to have a credit line of up to one million zloty. However, since Elektryt was in financial difficulties even before the initiation of hostilities, the company Tungsram had forbidden me to supply Elektryt the radiotubes on credit.
Of the three Elektryt owners, only Naum Lewin remained in the city.
The other two, the brothers Samuel and Gregory Chwoles had left town.
The first one managed to go to England with his wife and son, Gregory Chwoles ran away to Kowno, the temporary capital of the democratic republic of Lithuaniaat the last minute.
Soon after their arrival the bolshevik authorities ordered Naum Lewin to start up the factory again - it was not operating mainly because of the shortage of radiotubes. Terrified, Naum Lewin rushed to me, imploring me to rescue him by supplying the 10,000 radiotubes needed to start Elektryt up- the Tungsram interdiction notwithstanding. I should note here that Lewin could well be terrified - we have all heard about the horrors of Stalin's Russia, and at that time the Red authorities had initiated numerous arrests in our city.
In order to help Lewin, I advised him to send some members of the lately established committee of Elektryt's plant workers and office employees to me to demand (citing the order of the Red authorities) the delivery to Elektryt of the radiotubes upon previously established conditions, i.e. payment by promissory notes. On the same day I issued the 10,000 radiotubes to the members of the workers committee, the engineers Rosenstein and Shulkin. As payment they brought me in a suitcase a few thousand of (now worthless) promissory notes with the face value of about seventy thousand zloty. Lewin was able to start operating the plant, although unfortunately this did not protect him, as we'll see.

Subsequently the Soviet authorities announced that they would hand Wilno over to the republic of Lithuania, since it was its historic capital. The Soviets limited their presence in Lithuania (temporarily, as we will see) to the building of some military bases. Simultaneously they announced the removal to Russia of the equipment of the Elektryt plant together with its expert workers and their families.
The bolsheviks arrested Naum Lewin, the co-owner of Elektryt and two members of its board of directors, Eugene Chwoles and Ilya Grigorewich Zaks, the firms legal counsel and deported them to Siberia. Of the three, only Zaks survived.
Before they left the bolsheviks took away the 20,000 radiotubes remaining in my stockroom. Admittedly, they did pay for them the prewar prices...

As mentioned before, during the short time of their occupation of Wilno in 1939 the bolsheviks had carried out numerous arrests.
I would like to note the nature of these arrests: both during this and their future occupations, the arrests were not directed against the reactionary elements of the population, as we might have expected from the representatives of

the "government of workers and peasants." They were directed against the people who thought about the weak and the poor and tried to help them - primarily against the leaders of the socialist parties, the Polish as well as the Jewish ones.

One of my customers, the owner of a large electrical supply business, Mieczyslaw Zejmo, an active member of the reactionary Polish Endek party was not arrested by the bolsheviks - they arrested his brother, a leader of the Polish Socialist party.

One of the first victims of these arrests was the talented criminal law attorney Chernikhow who had constantly defended the communists in their trials by the Polish courts. The accused in these trials were young and idealistic, mostly Jewish. They erroneously believed in their ignorance that communism would be the panacea for all human ills.

At this time, as well as during the subsequent occupation of our city in the summer of 1940, when the bolsheviks arrested and executed Ehrlich and Alter, the leaders of "Bund", Poland's Jewish Socialist party, after they had fled to Wilno from Warsaw, the numerous arrests had the same character. They clearly pointed out the intention of the bolsheviks to annihilate without mercy those who might disturb their transformation of the population into an unquestioning, obedient, unthinking herd.

Here I would like to point out one more circumstance.

Twenty years had passed since I parted from the Russian masses and now, after the long separation the picture before my eyes was really despondent.

I realized that Stalin's secret police had spat upon and trampled not only the spirits of the former leaders of communism who during the so called "exhibition trials" were forced through inhuman torture to confess to crimes they had never committed and glorify their executioners. The forcing of Russia's manyfaceted and multicolored essence into the rigid, rationalistic Marxist formula crucified the soul of the majority of the Russian people, leaving no trace of their former warmth, truthfulnes and sincerity.

Stalin, by that time the absolute dictator, insisted on the complete realization of the Marxist doctrine, its catastrophic results notwithstanding. Having made his former comrades the scapegoats for the initial economic failures, Stalin forced the Russian people to conclude the thorny, blood and tears covered trail toward socialism through merciless terror - exacting victims by the millions. In his system of unprecedented coercion and moral imprisonment, perfidy and treachery were encouraged and rewarded.

The changes in Russia during the twenty years of my absence, the moral and physical desolation inescapably had to leave an imprint on the psychology and exterior of the "newcomers from the East". The "Yezhovshchina" terror had trampled with blood, hunger and torture the human dignity of the Soviet citizen, transforming him into a slave and a lying one at that.

He learned through personal experience that "truth" was for him an unaffordable and even dangerous luxury, that to demand justice was tantamount to suicide.

Cornered by life, his actions were dictated, as for the primitive animal, by the innate self preservation instinct, striving in the first place for survival.

The actualization of the Marxist doctrine brought the Soviet citizen unprecedented moral and physical suffering instead of the promised paradise.

In the agrarian sector, after the "raskulachivanye", the destruction of the well-to-do peasant, the forcible collectivization was carried through even though, because of the resistance of the peasants, it exacted millions of victims and indirectly brought the country years of famine and a permanent agricultural crisis continuing to the present.

In industry, during a number of industrial "five year plans" all the material and labor resources of the country were invested exclusively into the creation of heavy industry as the basis of a socialist economy - in total disdain of the daily needs of the population. This transformed the daily life of the Soviet citizen into a nightmare, with the severe shortages of not just food but which included the lack of everything, beginning with a needle and ending with the roof over ones head. But the sufferings brought by socialism were not limited to physical privations only.

I would like to add that the mentality of the "newcomers" was not just an imprint of dramatic happenings to the east of us.

It was also a living contradiction of the teachings of Marx. After twenty years of the socialist form of production in Russia, the possessive instincts for ownership were strengthened rather than diminished.

The ambition of every Red army soldier (which it appeared he could not realize at home) was "to own" a wrist watch. Desiring to realize his dream of owning "a personal" radioreceiver, a Soviet general woke me up at midnight begging me to sell him some radiotubes for the radio that he managed to procure from the factory Elektryt.

I would also like to mention the changes in the speech of the "newcomers", whose language became very crude.

Their speech was not only bereft of any Latin or French expressions and words which abounded in the language of the intelligentsia and in literature (the writers used to be cultured landowners). It was the speech of the Russian "muzhik", the illiterate language of the forsaken villages from which most of them stemmed. The amazing fact, which shocked both myself and my wife, was that, characteristically, this backward, ungrammatical speech came even from the mouth of the director of the "Lenin" gymnasium in which our daughter Perella was enrolled in the fall of 1940.

In the area of education, compulsory general education was introduced in the Soviet Union during the time of our separation. According to the momoirs of the former czarist minister Kokovzev, the topic of introduction of general compulsory education was repeatedly discussed during czarist times, but each time had to be delayed because of the absence of an adequate cadre of qualified teachers.

The Soviets introduced compulsory education at a time when the cadre of teachers was greatly diminished because of the civil war, subsequent emigration and the terror of which the intellectuals were the major victims; this unquestionably had to affect the quality of education.

This circumstance explains the facts that so surprised us - that the Peoples' Comissar of the Soviet Republic wrote "according of order" instead of "according to order", a physician wrote "apiration" instead of "operation", a supply agent wrote "matelial" instead of "material" to mention just a few.

In mid October the Soviets gave Wilno with its surrounding villages to Lithuania as promised, keeping a couple of military bases.

Lithuania, who at the outcome of the first World War was granted independance (together with Poland, Latvia and Estonia), was a democratic republic headed at that time by president Smetona and with its temporary capital in Kowno (Kaunas). Ironically, the population of Wilno, "the historic capital of Lithuania" consisted (in complete absence of Lithuanians) solely of Jews (35%) and Poles. I will not return to the historic reasons of this paradox since I have elucidated them at the beginning of these diaries.

However, the fact that everything Lithuanian, including the language, was completyly foreign to us evoked in our new masters feelings that were far from friendly toward the inhabitants of Wilno.

These were expressed by the mass beatings of Jews [14] by the Lithuanian police a few days after their taking of power.

---

[14] on Basilianska street.

The other hoodlum act of the new authorities, with which they put the community into a desperate situation, was the complete annulment of the Polish Zloty as currency, declaring the Lithuanian "Lit", (possessed by nobody) the only valid means of payment.
It was only a few weeks after their taking over of power that the Lithuanian authorties declared that they would exchange the Polish Zloty (which the people had on hand) for Lithuanian Lits. However, the declared rate of exchange was very low - about 35% of the prewar parity of the zloty - 0.40 lits for a zloty.
Moreover, from the 50,000 Lithuanian lits which we obtained after depositing 125,000 zloty in the bank my wife and I got out a small sum only, 90% of the lits owed us was put in accounts in the Lithuanian bank. The accounts were blocked (on hold), and the bank paid us 250 lits a month.
I succeeded to unblock my account by ordering merchandise from out of the country. Before going over to the description of the circumstances of that period, I want to add that when the Russian forces had left for the neighbouring Soviet Bielorussia after having ceded Wilno to the Lithuanians, they were joined by some Jewish young people who were communist sympathizers. Among them was Ovsey Wapner, an employee of my firm. I was sorry to see him go since Ovsey was a honest and responsible worker.
In the setting of Polish antisemitism depriving Jews of hope for the future, Ovsey, (like some other idealistic Jewish Wilno youths) believed that communism would bring something new and better.
Ovsey left Wilno with his three brothers and settled in the neighboring town of [15] situated on the Soviet side. Two of his brothers were members of the communist party, for which one of them, (the painter) was deported to the infamous Polish concentration camp of "Kartuz-Bereza" and the other was sentenced to many years of imprisonment. Both brothers were released only after the occupation of eastern Poland by the Red Army.
I elaborate upon this circumstance in some detail, since after about one year Ovsey returned to Wilno in a terrible condition. His experience is not without interest since it characterizes the Soviet reality.

The passage of our city to capitalist Lithuania intensified greatly the flow to Wilno of Jewish refugees from Poland (largely from the parts occupied by the Germans). Thus the Jewish population grew from 70,000 to 100,000 people, the departure to the east with the Russians of a rather insignificant small group notwithstanding.
The fact that almost all the foreign powers had representation with the Lithuanian government in Kowno opened the possibility of getting out of the "sphere of Soviet influence" - provided one could get the appropriate visa.
During the following winter a part (mostly the well-to-do) of the refugees took avantage of this circumstance and were able go to the United States, Israel and other countries.

For myself, having found myself in a country with a capitalist economy, a country which maintained peaceful relations with its neighbours, I decided to continue with my business activities.
Lithuania, having lost its main Baltic sea port Klaipeda (Memel) to the Germans, was mainly an agricultural country with only the inception of a light industry.
Its successful agrarian reform, which liquidated the large land ownings completely, created a well-to-do peasantry who had a good purchasing capability.

---

[15] Szarkowszczyzna,

To the latter contributed to no small extent the agricultural cooperatives created by the governement - "Maistas" for meat and "Pienocentas" for the dairy products. These eliminated the customary long chain of intermediaries between the peasant and the customer.
Of the Lithuanian industries I would like to enumerate: [16]

The "Self-determination of Nations" declared by the victors of the first Warld War awakened the national consciousness in the Lithuanian people previously drowsing under the czar.
However, because of the "Polonization" resulting from the Union of Lithuania and Poland in the sixteenth century, Lithuania began its existance as an independant country with only a modest cultural inheritance. During the twenty years of its independence Lithuania laboured hard to achieve its own, ancestral culture.
I would like to mention here that, having very little in common with both the Slavic as well as the Germanic, the Lithuanian language was closer to Sanscrit than any other European language.
The care of the Lithuanian governement created a network of schools with Lithuanian as the teaching language and a University in the city of Kaunas (Kowno), although the latter had to use German textbooks.
Simultaneously with the press and theater, the best permanent opera in all of the Baltic states was established in Kaunas, mostly through the efforts of the tenor Piotrowski (Petrauskas), previously an artist of the Petrograd Imperial Opera.
Jews constituted about 10% of the two million population of Lithuania at the time when Wilno was joined to it in October of 1939. The civil rights of the Jews were safeguarded by the constitution of the country as well as the "Treatise on the rights of Minorities" which Lithuania had signed at receiving its independence in Versailles.
During the first years after the creation of the Lithuanian Republic there existed a special ministry for Jewish affairs headed by Dr. Soloweiczik to handle the affairs of the Jews, the largest minority. It was terminated in the mid twenties.
At the beginning of the memoirs I had mentioned that in May of 1915 the whole Jewish population of Lithuania had to leave their homes and was banished deep into Russia upon the order of the military authorities. Upon their return to their native land at the war's end however, the Lithuanian Jews were able to get incorporated into the economy of the country and soon, thanks to their diligence and creative initiative were dominating the trade (especially the foreign one) and the industry of Lithuania.

The economic circumstances of the Lithuanian Jews were relatively better than those of their brethern in Poland. The extensive Jewish poverty, typical of Polish towns with large Jewish populations was absent in Lithuania.

---

[16] The leather industry, with the plant of Frenkel, the largest in the Baltic states in the town of Shavli and the slightly smaller plant of Nurok in the same location.
Of the other branches of industry in Lithuania, the following were manufactures worth mentioning: the one of bricks (with the plant "Palemonas" of the brother priests Wolokaitis, "Sargenia" of Grudinski and others),
those of window glass (the plant in Radwiliszki),
sawmills (those of Okinski, Solowejczik, Naftalej and others),
breweries (of Wolf),
textiles (Feinbergs and others)
rubber (the plants "Inkara" and "Guma",
construction (the brothers Ingolski and others).

The attitude toward the Jews of the Smetona government, if not favorable, was at least correct. Nothing foretold the subsequent fatal for the Jews outcome.

Grievously, events soon revealed that even though no people had contributed as much toward the development of Lithuania's productivity as did the Jews, the Lithuanian multitude harbored a ferocious hatred toward them.

As we will soon demonstrate, the Jewish successes, resulting from their pioneering, productive work which benefited the countries in which they sojourned constituted the capital transgression for which the European nations (the Lithuanians were not the only ones) could not forgive the Jews.

I would like to add that during the blood bath the Lithuanians surpassed all the other nations with their merciless cruelty. Whereas the majority of the other European nations had cooperated (to a lesser or greater extent) with the German murderers, or in Germany where the government - ordered extermination of the Jews was carried out by a specifically trained corps (the SS), in Lithuania the brutal annihilation of the Jews was performed by the preponderance of Lithuanians on their own fiendish initiative. But I am reaching too far ahead here.

Coming back to our lives in 1939 - 1940: The new boundaries had cut me off from the Warsaw factories supplying me with my merchandise.

Since I intended to continue my wholesale business it was essential for me to find new sources of supply.

In Lithuania there were two smallish rubber factories - "Inkara" and "Guma". Of the items carried by me these manufactured only rubber hose and poor quality bicycle tires. Lithuania had to import from out of the country lightbulbs, radiotubes as well as car batteries.

Since Tungsram as well as the other members of the European cartel which I used to represent in Wilno already had other representatives in Lithuania and therefore could not supply me, I had to order from other sources:[17]

At the same time, in partnership with my brother-in-law Yeremey Saulovich Cholem and a Lithuanian colonel Yurgutis (whom the government had imposed upon us as it issued our concession) we undertook the construction of the first lightbulb factory in Lithuania according to the design of engineer Talhoffer. The latter, once a coworker of "Tungsram" in the last years before the war was managing the lightbulb factory "Helios" in Katowice which he had constructed. Since the "Helios" lightbulbs were equal in quality to those of the European cartel, the latter, after a futile struggle, was forced to accept "Helios" into the cartel.

Engineer Talhoffer found himself in Wilno as a refugee because of the occupation of Katowice by the German forces.

The complete quiet which reigned on the Western front (where the Allies were passive behind the fortifications of the Maginot line) and Stalin's assurances that he had no plans of aggression against Lithuania had a soothing effect.

Under these circumstances, having in engineer Talhoffer an unquestionably competent technical supervisor we decided on beginning the construction of the lightbulb factory after procuring the concession from the government -

---

[17] 200,000 lightbulbs from the Italian "Fuldzent" factory which did not belong to the cartel. I also ordered a few hundred popular in Europe car batteries "Varta" from Berlin, rubberized driving belts from the "Continental" plant in Hannover, in the same city different electrical utensils such as coffeemakers, teakettles etc. and insulated copper cables from Eupen in Belgium.

even though the war was officially continuing. To this purpose I, Yeremey S. and colonel Yurgutis founded a stock holding company with the capital of 200,000 lit, paying in 20,000 at the founding of the company.
We hired eng. Talhoffer upon a two year contract with a monthly salary of 12,100 lit and leased a long two story stone wing of Gimbut's building as the location of the factory.
The series of automatic machines which, as Talhoffer assured us, would produce lightbulbs in the most technically advanced way we ordered from Berlin upon his instruction. However, when the Germans after first accepting the order refused delivery after a couple of months we transferred the order to Switzerland.

The lightbulb manufacturing promised to be quite profitable, since the wholesale price for lightbulbs established at that time by the cartel was at least 1.25 lit per lightbulb (depending on candle power), whereas the mean cost of manufacture was not supposed to surpass 0.35 lit.
The German non-delivery of the machines by slowing the realization of our plans diminished the losses of the partnership since in connection with the subsequent political happenings we had to give up the plans of lightbulb production in Lithuania with the loss of all of the invested capital.
I linger in some detail on my unsuccessful attempt to produce lightbulbs in Lithuania since it, together with my other experiences throw some light upon the tempo of technological progress of the socialist economy in this important branch of industry.
In my search for new sources of merchandise I had enquired at the appropriate "trust" in Moscow whether they could supply me with lightbulbs. After more than a month's silence I received a telegram from Moscow with the offer of supplying me with 100,000 of each kind of lightbulb. At my request samples were received after some delay.
To my great surprise I found that the Soviet lightbulbs were lagging behind the technology of the European lightbulbs by many decades.
Every lightbulb draws on energy on one hand and produces light on the other. The quality of a lightbulb is determined by the ratio between the quantity of energy used and the quantity of light produced.
In the West, after the carbon wire was discontinued, the Wolfram wire introduced and the partial vaccuum changed to argon and krypton gases in the lightbulb, this ratio was gradually improved i.e. with the same amount of energy more light was produced.
Just the fact that instead of the copper socket used in the West the Soviets used an iron one, a poorer conductor of electricity (as I observed in the smples sent me) lowered the efficiency of the lightbulb.
Moreover at the time when we in the west filled the lightbulb with the gas argon beginning with those of 40 candlepower as a rule and lately with krypton beginning with 15 c.p., the Soviets filled the lightbulbs with argon starting with 60 c.p. only.
The reason why the Soviets did not avail themselves of the easily available modern technology for the production of efficient lightbulbs and thus wasted millions of tons of coal which was not abundant in Russia is not known to me. Personally, I am inclined to assume that the main reason should not be looked for in any negative traits of the Russian character, but rather in the specific peculiarities of the socialist economic system.

With the annexation of Wilno to Lithuania we were able to re-establish contact with my wife's much beloved brother, doctor Leon Gerstein who lived in Kowno with his wife Marusia and his daughter (of the same age as our

daughter and also named Perella). We began then an exchange of visits: Marusia and the Kowno Perelochka would come to us, Ida and our Perelochka would go to Kowno.
I recall that the "Kownians" came to us for the Christmas vacation and we spent the New Year's Eve together. The Kowno Perella was a lovely, musical and highly spirited girl who entertained us by charmingly singing Russian songs. A strong personality, in the impromptu skit the two Perellas put on she assigned our daughter the role of the decrepit "Old Year" shuffling in my floppy slippers and robe, keeping for herself the role of the beautiful "New Year", becomingly dressed like a ballerina. Our daughter was perfectly happy - not so my wife who felt that her darling was not shown to advantage.

A gifted student, our niece, like the majority of children of the well-to-do Kowno Jewish families was enrolled in a Hebrew language elementary school. Yiddish continued to be the language of the Jewish masses, but the great piety with which it was surrounded in Wilno was nearly absent and there was no network of Yiddish language schools.
Russian continued to be the language of Jewish intelligentsia in Lithuania, where this circumstance did not seem to evoke the hostile reaction from the Lithuanians that it did in Wilno from the Poles.
As I recall, coming to Kowno from Wilno (as I did for business), I would find myself in a completely different world. After the first World War destiny had treated Kowno and its Jewish inhabitants much more kindly than it did Wilno. Wilno's situation was exceptionally difficult, surrounded as it was (because of the absence of land reform) by a destitute peasantry and deprived of both raw materials and markets by the proximity of the "dead" - sealed frontiers with the Soviets and Lithuania. The repeated (and as we have seen far from painless for the Jewish population) changes of the governing authorities aggravated the situation. The sad economic situation against which the residents of Wilno had to struggle is vividly pointed out by the fact that the population of Wilno did not grow but rather diminished during the twenty years between the two World Wars.
For Kowno, which became the capital of Lithuania after the occupation of Wilno by the Poles, the stability of government, the good purchasing power of the surrounding peasantry and (for the Jewish inhabitants) the absence of militant antisemitism created favorable conditions for economic development. Thus I remember that coming to Kowno I would find myself in a world which exuded serenity, satiety, abundance and confidence in a secure tomorrow.

Almost complete quiet reigned on all the European fronts during the winter of 1939 - 1940. The only exception was Finland, where under the expert leadership of general Mannerheim the Finnish people were able to resist the Soviet attack for a long time. A year before, on the basis of incriminating documents (which, according to Schellenberg, the director of Hitlers espionage, was artfully given Stalin by the latter), Stalin had the Red Army's High Command headed by general Tukhachevsky put to death. Deprived of experienced leadership the Russian troops attacking Finland had suffered huge losses.
This lengthy and complete lull on European fronts encouraged optimistic forecasts about the near future and intensified our hopes of a safe and peaceful future - perhaps because we so wholeheartedly desired it.
In accord with this mood I promptly began the construction of the lightbulb factory and the ordering of merchandise from varied European countries; I received what I ordered.

In reality our hopes were, if not entirely baseless, at any rate premature since the Allies, even though completely inactive, had most decisively refused to accept the Fait Accompli created by the partition of Poland.

The lull on the western front ended when Hitler, proclaiming the "right of ruthless might" unexpectedly, without declaring war attacked and occupied the neutral countries of Denmark and Norway in April of 1940. In response the Allies landed in Narwick in Northern Norway.
On May 10th of 1940 Hitler attacked without warning neutral Belgium and Holland, subjecting to aerial bombardment objects of non-military character, causing especially heavy losses among the civilian population and terrible destruction in the Dutch port city of Rotterdam.
Almost simultaneously - on May 13th, the Germans (according to the plan of general Erich Manstein) circumvented to the north the French Maginot Line fortifications and with a joint attack of large tanks and dive bombers broke through the French front in the Ardennes near Sedan - the same place where in 1870 the defeated French army led by the Emperor Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussians.
The penetrating German tank divisions, followed by motorized infantry were commanded by general Heinz Guderian, the originator of the new method of tank utilization in modern warfare. Guderian headed not southwest, toward Paris, but to the north to the seacoast which he reached after 10 days with the occupation of the port Abeville on the English channel. With this the Germans surrounded the retreating English Expeditionary Corps and some French forces which rushed to the help of the Belgian army when headed by their king the Belgians resisted the German attack. The 48 hour long immobility of the German forces, the reason for which is as yet not well explained, gave England the chance (after abandoning equipment and heavy artillery) to evacuate 330,000 of mostly their own but also French soldiers through the French port of Dunkirque by a heroic sea rescue.
The French attempt to hold back the onslaught of German forces with the hastily fortified line called the Weygand line (after the new French commanding officer who took over from general Hammelin) was unsuccessful and on June 14th, 1940 the Germans occupied Paris.

This fact had an immediate fatal repercussion on our destinies since with the fall of Paris Stalin's last hope of a repetition of the events of the first World War was lost and with it crashed the brilliant prospects for communism planned by him - built though these prospects were on the mutual destruction of the European proletarian masses whose only defenders the bolsheviks had declared themselves to be.
These new circumstances ominously indicated to Stalin that he had made a mistake frought with fatal consequences for Russia.
That when he helped Hitler (supposedly to create the balance of power and the resulting mutual destruction of the adversaries needed for the triumph of communism) thinking that Hitler was the weaker, in reality he was helping the stronger adversary.
Thus he had helped Hitler to eliminate the subsequently all-important Western Front for the reestablishment of which bleeding Russia had to wait for all of four years.
Remaining with Hitler one to one Stalin realised that he had helped Hitler get under his control the whole of the West European industral potential, the Lotharinghian iron ore, the Rumanian oil, the Yugoslav bauxite and the French wheat.

The day after the fall of Paris on June 15th, 1940, feverishly trying to improve the strategic situation of the Soviet Union, Stalin, the solemn promise given by him a short time before notwithstanding, occupied Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Bessarabia.
Stalin's actions did not succed in delaying the looming day of reckoning, as the near future showed - nor did they offset to even the smallest degree the enormous gains that Hitler made through Stalin's cooperation.
The democratic government of Lithuania headed by president Smetona hurriedly left the country at the news of the Red Army's entrance into Lithuania.

Once again I linger in detail on the felonious actions of the Moscow Politburo in the fall of 1939 with which they by "unchaining Hitler" hurled Europe into an ocean of blood and tears.

Thus by tearing off from communism its pacifist disguise I emphasize the danger to humanity that this doctrine represents.
Through the irony of destiny, for the crimes committed by Stalin and his clique, for which there can be no sufficient retribution, paid not to the malefactors, but Russia, and the Jewish people most of all.

The occupation of our city on June 15th of 1940 by the Red Army represented a turning point in our lives.
Not realizing the full import of these events, though my wife and I stayed in town we nevertheless rented a small summer house for Perella in Wolokumpia where she was cared for by the sister of my friend Alosha and her daughter.
We did not know then the whole horror of our situation "between two hells".
On one side there were the bolsheviks for whom even though I had committed no crime, just the fact that I was a businessman and a successful one at that made me "socially harmful" and condemned me and my family to the slow and painful death in the camps of the Arctic.
On the other side were the Germans for whom we committed a crime by the mere fact that we were born Jewish - a crime which carried a death penalty.

Having occupied Lithuania the Soviet authorities immediately started the "sovietization" of the country according to the method they had successfully used many times before.
The mass arrests started immediately in furtherance of a twofold goal:
the terrorization of the population transforming it into a slavishly obedient mass and on the other hand the elimination of politically or socially active people who they thought might perturb this transformation. The mere fact of belonging to some public organization was a sufficient reason for being put on the black list.
This was the time when the bolsheviks, as I had mentioned before, bloodily got rid of Ehrlich and Alter, the leaders of "Bund", Poland's Jewish Socialist party.

A grotesque picture from this time comes to my mind: soon after the occupation of Lithuania by the Red Army the First Lithuanian division headed by the attached Soviet Political Comissars marched slowly, each step echoing loudly through the deathly silent main street of our city carrying placards proclaiming: "We demand the unification of our Lithuanian Republic with the fraternal Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics."
About the real feelings of the Lithuanian soldiers tells us unequivocally the fact that in less than a year, when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, the same Lithuanian soldiers were enthusiastically shooting the hurriedly retreating Russians in the back.
The carrying out of the "democratic" formalities in order to fool the credulous in the outside world (of whom, I should note, there were quite a few) took one week only.
Terrorized by the arrests and executions, the whole population voted and, as the official computations had asserted - 99% declared for unification of the Lithuanian republic with the Soviet Union.
The Lithuanian Soviet government was formed out of the Lithuanian communists under the direction of Suslow, the head of the Organization Bureau sent from Moscow. [18]

---

[18] Sneckus was the Secretary of the Politburo; Paleckis - the President of the Republic; Gedvilas - the Chairman of the Sovnarkom (Soviet People's Commissariat) and Sumauskas - the Narkom (People's commissar) of industry.

At the beginning of August, 1940 the new authorities placed a commissar into my business - a young Jew named Sycz. The business operations were continued as before, but all the receipts from sales had to be deposited to the business account at the Lithuanian Bank to which I had no access.

Before I begin the further description of events I would like to mention that at the end of July, before I was cut off from my monetary resources, I was still able to help my sister Emma and get her out of a difficulty.

As I have noted before, during the last years before the war Emma's husband, Aron Moyseyevich, had a good income (perhaps as good as mine) as a representative of many large Polish factories, among them the biggest in Poland steel mill, "Huta Pokoj". However, when the war cut him off from upper Silesia where these enterprises were situated he found himself almost penniless for reasons not quite clear to me.

I should mention that for many years, during the last years before the war as chairwoman, my sister Emma had generously worked without remuneration in the Orphan's Help Committee which was managing a few orphanages subsidized by the American "Joint".

I would also like to say that in her work Emma displayed a great love and devotion for the children she took care of. For instance, at the beginning of the war, as soon as she learned that the German bombs fell on the edge of town "Zarzecze" where the orphanages were situated, Emma ran in the middle of the night to check whether her orphans had been hurt.

Remembering my sister Emma the picture before my eyes is of a person of exceptional morality and strength which we had seen she exhibited at the loss of her young, only son. She had a love of humanity, not diminished by this recent personal tragedy, an exaltation of mind and a rather exaggerated faith in man.

I guess we all, nurtured on the romantic literature of the 19th century, believed that humanity's progress was not limited to the field of technology alone - with this, as we will see, we made it easier for Hitler to achieve his bloody schemes against us.

In the beginning of April 1940 Emma had to disclose to the "Joint" representative, a certain Giterman that, because of the sudden deterioration of their financial situation she would not be able to continue to work for the orphans without remuneration. In response Giterman told her to take out as salary 400 lit a month from the treasury of the society. In accordance with this Emma had taken out 1600 lit as salary by the end of July, when the representatives of the Soviet authorities announced their intention to take over the orphanages. However, when Emma charged the "Joint" representative to put the withdrawn by her money through the books the latter declared that he could not formalize the agreement - thus creating a shortage of 1600 lit in Emma's cash box.

When my sister rushed to me pale and desperate and told me about her situation, I remember that instead of 1600 I gave her 2000 lit when upon my inquiry she admitted that they had nothing for living expenses.

On September 30th of 1940 my business was nationalized by the Soviet authorities, at the same time as were the other large private enterprises of Lithuania. This did not only deprive me of the fruits of many years of labour - as a "nationalized merchant" I, together with prostitutes, criminals, etc. became a "socially harmful factor" - a fact which in Stalin's Russia with its system of mass repression predicted death in the Arctic concentration camps for myself and my family.

Concurrently with mine the businesses of members of my wife's family were nationalized too: the lumber yard of my late father-in-law, the metalware business of my brother-in-law Yeremey S. Cholem and the wholesale dress goods store of my brother-in-law Naum I. Zlatin.

Following the nationalization of the industrial and mercantile enterprises of Lithuania, the larger real estate properties were nationalized in the urban areas - this included our family's apartment house on 28 Wilkomirska street in which lived my mother and the families of my sister Anya and brother Yefim.

The Sovietization which ruined me and my wife's family improved the financial situation of my sister Emma. Her husband, Aron M. became the director of a large paper mill in Nowo-Werki which belonged to the Jewish family Shwartz before it was nationalized.

To give a full picture of the situation I should say that the Sovietization, while castigating those on whom destiny used to smile, opened new prospects (at least for the time being) to those who were unsuccessful, either through their own fault or because of difficult circumstances.

I would also like to mention the fact that, after the bolshevik takeover and prior to the nationalization, the relations between the employees and the employers disclosed feelings which were diligently hidden before.

To be fair, one has to admit that even though in many cases on the part of the employees there was spiteful satisfaction, since many of them used to begrudge the employers well being, there was often a well deserved "hour of settling accounts" for the occasional employer's undue greed, exploitation and undeserved insults.

For me personally this difficult moment passed rather painlessly. The following fact speaks for the quality of my relationship with my employees: as I have mentioned before, when the bolsheviks gave our city (temporarily, as we have seen) to the capitalist Lithuania my idealistic employee, Ovsey Wapner, left with the Reds (my pleas notwithstanding) searching for a country that possessed social justice. He and his brothers who had been persecuted by the Poles for their communist convictions moved to a neighbouring town[19] which, as part of western Belorussia taken away from Poland, remained under the Soviets. It was the home of the fiancee of one of the brothers.

A year later, in the winter of 1940-1941, at a time when I was eagerly though vainly trying to find for myself a place in the Soviet system (hoping thus to avoid the destiny of a "nationalized merchant"), our door opened and in came Ovsey Wapner - emaciated, ragged and hungry.

According to Ovsey's tale, to begin with both he and his brothers found government employment in[20] However, they soon had to flee in the dark of the night to avoid imprisonmet after, upon the pleas of the town's Jews his brothers (both meritorious communist party members) tried to prevent the appointment of a local reactionary antiSemite to the membership of the Supreme Soviet. After lengthy and painful wanderings Ovsey finally succeeded in getting a job in the town of Slonim as a salesman in the "Spetztorg" store which catered exclusively to the privileged classes of the Soviet society. But Ovsey was soon fired from his "Spetztorg" job since he, the naive idealist, upset the thievery of his co-workers who came from the Soviet Union (the so called Easterners). In that difficult for him moment Ovsey, richer in experience now, decided to return to his native Wilno, although by that time Wilno was sovietized too. Ovsey was able to sleep with some relatives but came to have dinner with us for some time.

---

[19] Szarkowszczyzna

[20] Szarkowszczyzna.

Looking back, I think with uncommon satisfaction of the fact that even during Soviet times my former employee came to me, his former employer, and found aid from me in his time of need. It is interesting to note that, even after his encounter with the unprepossessing Soviet reality Ovsey was not disenchanted with communism and continued to see it as the panacea for all human ills.

Coming back to the events looming in our lives, I should note that one of the harassments aimed at the propertied classes that marked the Sovietization of Lithuania was the mass eviction of the formerly affluent from their rather comfortable apartments. One of its first victims, as the owner of the largest business in Wilno, was my brother-in-law Yeremey S. Cholem. He and his wife Rachil found shelter in Antokol, at the outskirts of town where my wife was born and had spent her early years. My mother-in-law, her sister Sara and son Naum moved back to Antokol too, to the old wooden family house which had escaped nationalization.

Bowing to the inevitable and without waiting for the order that would evict us from our apartment on Zawalna 2, we too decided to move to the family house in Antokol and in fact started to move our belongings there.

However here happened something which ultimately preserved us from mortal danger. On the assumed moving day my wife woke up sobbing with a foreboding of misfortune. She did not want to move to Antokol where her Perella would suffer the same deprivations that she underwent as a young girl when during the first World War because of cessation of the horse drawn transport she was cut off from schooling and social life. Ida begged me, before we gave up our home, to go to the City Hall and check with the dwelling committee whether they had a requisition (eviction) order for our apartment. At the committee where I learned that there was as yet no requisition for our apartment, I met David Kaplan-Kaplanski (the husband of Yeremey Cholem's sister Tatyana), the former director of the Cholem enterprise. The Kaplanskis, who lived with the Cholems, had to leave the apartment on Kwiatowa street too. However, since officially he was counted as an employee rather than a coowner of the nationalized business, Kaplanski managed, (as a leader of the "Yiddishist" movement among whose members there were many passive as well as active communists) to obtain the important position of assistant to the chief of the General Administration of Supply.

Kaplanski was at the dwelling committee to procure housing for himself and his chief, the Lithuanian Sushinskis, whose family remained in Kowno. Kaplanski accepted my suggestion that he and Sushinskis should move to my apartment where I gave up to them four out of our six rooms - with this I shielded my apartment from requisiton; in addition, we subsequently avoided a mortal peril when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. At that time the Antokol house was destroyed by German bombing my mother-in-law sustained a light wound but my wife's brother Naum was mortally wounded and expired on that day.

By sharing our apartment with the Kaplanskis we managed to stay (even though not for long, as we will soon see) in our well accustomed place.

But soon came other troubles. Besides my business enterprise (merchandise and Bank accounts), and the inherited real estate the Soviets took away from me Municipal Credit Society Obligations for 20,00 zloty and the 17,000 Russian rubles which remained with me since the Soviet occupation of 1939.

The nationalization did not touch our home furnishings, clothing, valuables and the 12,000 lit which remained in my wife's "blocked" account in the Lithuanian bank, (from which we received 250 lit a month).

However these last were also imperiled: the Soviet authorities did not content themselves with the taking of our enterprises, they also demanded that we personally pay the business taxes for 1941.

Fearing confiscation I entrusted our jewelry for safekeeping to my mother and my sister Anya who resided in our family apartment house on 28 Wilkomirska street. The valuables consisted of a massive solid gold cigarette case, two man's golden pocket watches, three antique golden enamelled bracelets, a diamond seeded platinum ladies watch and a gold 1 1/2 carat diamond ring.

I give this rather detailed account of these valuables since they, except for the cigarette case, were lost in rather unusual circumstances and of course this loss made our economic situation more precarious in the later, tragic period of our lives.

Our lives in that period were dominated by our deep (unfortunately well founded) concern about our future. In Stalin's Russia my belonging to the "socially harmful" cathegory of nationalized businessmen presaged nothing auspicious.

Assuming that a government job would improve our situation I started a feverish search for work in the lumber industry - a field in which I had many years of experience. With this in mind I repeatedly went to Kowno, the location of the Soviet government. There my close relative, engineer Haim Alperovich succeeded in becoming the assistant to the People's Comissar of Industry, one Shumauskas. However, even the personal intervention of my relative, which I obtained with great difficulty, did not bring any positive results, leaving our family in the same unenviable situation.

In the meantime the happenings in the west left Europe at the mercy of Hitler and his ally Mussolini whose armies invaded French Savoy at the last moment and knifed France in the back. After the fall of Paris on June 14th, 1940, a "capitulation" government was created in the resort Vichy, headed by the hero of WW I, the famous defender of Verdun, marshall Philippe Petain. Petain refused Winston Churchill's offer to establish a British-French Union of both empires in order to continue the struggle and subsequently decided to give up the fight. The armistice in which France (in spite of their obligations to their ally) pledged to stop military actions and demobilize their army, leaving Hitler in possession of France's northern sections, including Paris, was signed, (upon Hitlers insistance) in the same forest near Compien in which the Germans had signed their capitulation on November 11th of 1918.

According to the provisions of the armistice France kept under its control its military fleet and numerous colonies in Africa and Asia.

A relatively small segment of the French military, headed by General De Gaulle refused to give up the struggle and was evacuated to England with the remains of the British expeditionary corps.

Having lost her main ally as well as the bulk of her armaments at Dunkirk, England nevertheless decided to continue the struggle alone.

In Winston Churchill, who displaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister, the English people found the needed leader of dauntless will who would lead them on the long, painful and bloody road to victory.

Churchill was able to inspire the nation to the greatest of efforts and sacrifices with his fiery eloquence. Besides his great organizing capabilities Churchill possessed another talent especially valuable for leaders during critical periods - the capacity to distinguish what was important from what was decisive for victory, and to find in himself the strength to sacrifice the important to ensure success in decisive circumstances.

This quality was demonstrated by Churchill when he took the difficult decision to give up the Pacific colonies to ensure the victory at El Alamein which, by cutting Germany off from the sources of oil in the Middle East would in great part determine the favorable for the "Democracies" denouement of the war.

Inspired by his lightning and really amazing successes on the continent, Hitler wanted to deprive England of the chance to recover from its defeat and after only a short respite began operations for its conquest. Hitler hoped to overcome the difficulty of crossing the Channel dividing England from the continent as well as the presence of a mighty British Fleet by the superiority, (both in quality as in quantity) of his Air Force.

Egged on by his deputy, air marshall Hermann Goering to establish an undisputed mastery of the air and to break the will to struggle of the population, Hitler began the pitiless daily bombing of mostly civilian targets in England, causing much destruction and casualties.

However, Hitler was unsuccessful in the realization of his plans which would have ensured the successful landing of German armed forces on the British isles. In the coming aerial battles fought daily over England in September and October the British were in no way inferior to the Germans neither in the training and bravery of their flyers nor in the quality of their fighter planes.

In consequence, losing an ever higher percentage of their bombers with each raid the Germans were forced to give up the daylight raids and confine themselves to random night bombings of London and other English cities causing destruction and great losses.

The city which suffered most terribly from these bombings aimed at the peaceful population was Coventry.

Hitlers inhuman, criminal warfare was contrary to International standards and evoked indignation from all over the world. It united the English even more in their hatred toward the Nazi barbarians and their iron determination to continue fighting the war until victory.

Having suffered his first substantial defeat Hitler had to give up his plan to invade England and thus force her to capitulate without having the time to mobilize and throw into the struggle the huge human and material resources of the empire.

Unable to eliminate England Hitler had to content himself with the liquidation of the western front on the continent prior to turning to the realization of his great dream, "the task entrusted to him by history"- the annihilation of the cradle of bolshevism in the east. I would like to note here that Hitler was only giving a new watchword and content to the ancient, persistent movement of the Germanic tribes toward the east, the so-called "Drang nach Osten" begun by the Teutonic knights and stopped only temporarily by Grunwald. We know from the conditions of the Brest Litovsk treaty of 1918 that the German Empire had the same aim - they too had nurtured the myth that the expansion of the German "Lebensraum" through huge conquests which threw Russia back to the boundaries of the old Muscovite princedom was an essential German right.

Being unable to accomplish all his schemes in their entirety since an invasion of England turned out to be beyond his reach Hitler turned to a hurried preparation for the "Blitzkrieg", intending to destroy the Soviet armed forces before England could recover from her defeat sufficiently to activate a Western Front on the European continent.

Pursuant to the complete change of direction in his plans of conquest (i.e. from west to east) Hitler, to protect his back began the building of the Atlantic fortifications stretching from the bay of Biscay to Skagarak. On the other hand, to protect his right flank for his future incursion deep into Russia, Hitler, now the undoubted master of Europe, constrained Hungary and the Balkan countries: Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to join the tripartite union of Germany, Italy and Japan - the so called "Axis". Greece, being the ally of England did not join the "Axis", it was carrying on a successful struggle with the forces of Mussolini who intruded upon its lands after having occupied Albanya. I should note that a couple of British divisions were in Greece at that time.

In the meantime the external Soviet-German friendship was blooming as it did before. At the time of Molotow's official visit to Berlin in October of 1940 both the toasts as well as the communicates proclaimed to the world the fervor of their amity. Stalin continued to supply Hitler ever more diligently with grain, as well as with the oil and manganese indispensable to his war machine. The huge Soviet propoganda machine continued to remind the peoples of the Soviet Union with undiminished zeal about the danger threatening them from imperialist England.

Perella was then a student in the fourth grade of a Russian ten year school. As the children were singing a patriotic song about defending their beloved fatherland in case of war, one of the children asked:

"who could attack us, would it be Germany?" the teacher answered: "oh no, Germany is our good friend, it is England who is our enemy". As far as I was concerned the ever emphasized assurances of Russo-German friendship did not fool me for even one minute.

It was clear to me from the very beginning that when Hitler, (in emulation of Imperial Germany), would try to greatly enlarge German borders by the force of arms, it would be in the east, not in the west.

Contrary to the opinion of the majority of those surrounding me I thought that Hitler's military operations in the west (carried out because of the Allies unconditional refusal to let him have a free hand in the east) were only the needed prologue to his plans of conquest of Russia.

A vignette from the latter part of the year 1940 stands even now before my eyes: at the height of flowering of the Russo-German friendship engineer Mosya Cholem (the brother of my brother-in-law Yermasha), hearing my opinion was running around our huge living room (the one we had yielded to the Kaplanskis) shouting repeatedly: "but Hitler would have to be crazy to attack Russia now!" I continued: "with the same certitude as that day will follow night, I predict that during the coming spring Hitler will attack Russia". Turning to my wife I said: "Your 250 lit (which the Lithuanian Bank would let us withdraw monthly from her account) we will get for the last time in April because in May the Germans will already be here." I should note that at that time I was right in my prediction: we know from the published archives that the attack on Russia (Barbarossa) was planned for the fist half of May and was delayed for six week because of the sudden upheaval in Yugoslavia.

HITLER'S ATTACK ON RUSSIA

Stalin refuses to believe
Hitlers victorious Balkan operation main reason for his downfall
Hitler's attack on Russia on June 22, 1941
Frenzied Soviet evacuation
Poddany's offer of help
Germans occupy Wilno

THE HOLOCAUST

Anti-Jewish measures
Mass murder begins with the grabbing of men (Khapuny)
Did we behave like "sheep to the slaughter"? No!
The German's diabolical, subtly worked out plan for our extermination
My horrifying arrest
Provokatzye
We are driven into the ghetto
Unspeakably crowded conditions in the ghetto
Perella is taken to the infectious barrack with scarlet fever
The Yom Kippur aktzye
Polish joy at the killing of Jews
Why antisemitism?
A decent German
The role of the ghetto chief Gens
The aktzye of "yellow life certificates"
Emma gives her "life certificate" to Eva
The night before the slaughter
The murder of our families
Killing of the second ghetto
German need of a work-force

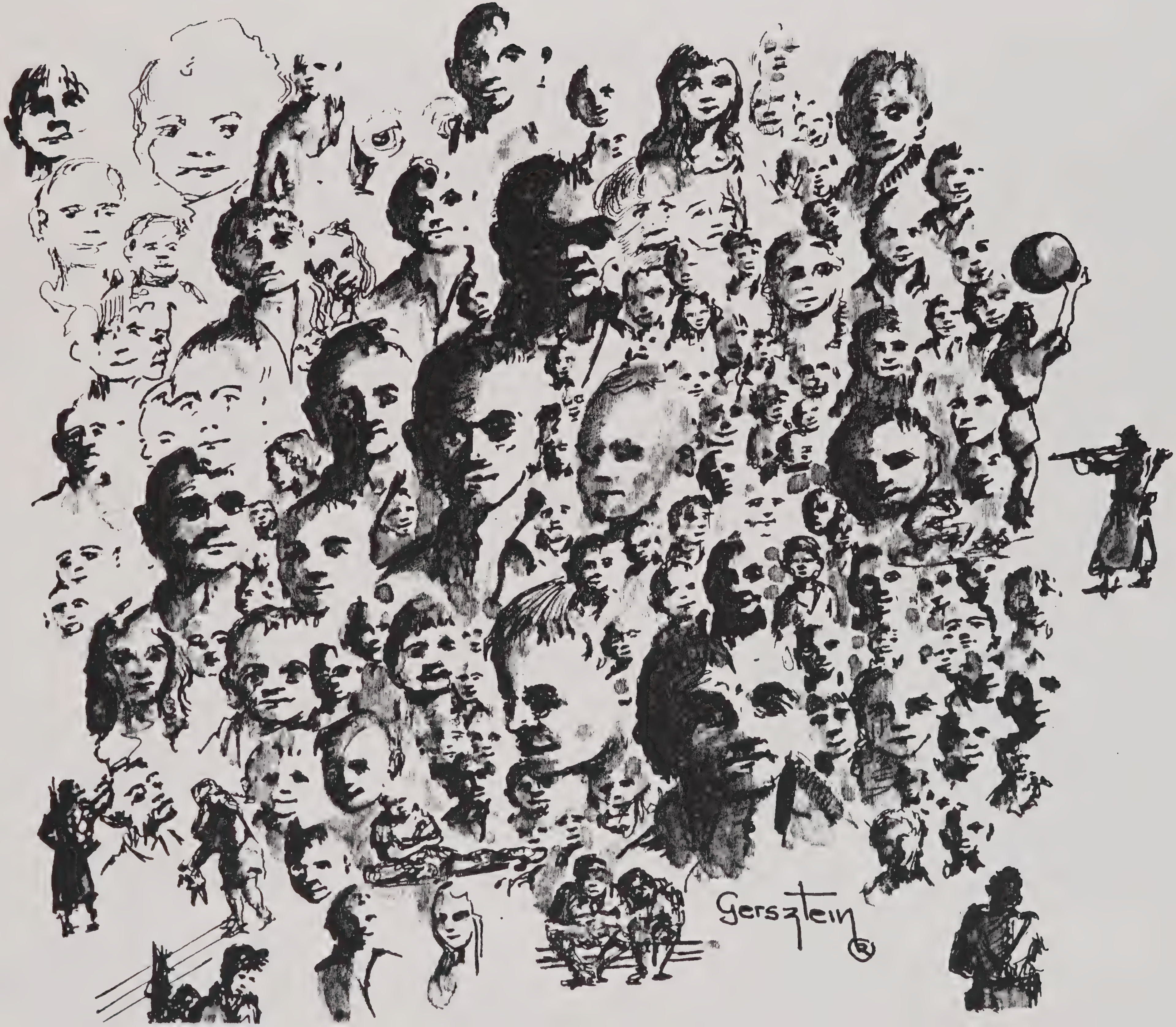
The very possibility of an attack by Hitler on the Soviet Union, obvious to all, was stubbornly rejected by Stalin, its absolute ruler. This calamitous fact facilitated the realization of Hitler's bloody plans.

The Soviet government had been officially warned of Hitler's imminent attack by the British government through Mayski, the Soviet ambassador to London. Stalin's reply came on June 14th, 1941, just eight days before the beginning of military operations, with a thunderous TASS declaration that the British imperialists would not manage to provoke a war between the Soviet Union and Germany.

From early spring on we would hear forecasts of the coming German attack.

The English radio station "B.B.C" (to which we all listened diligently) spoke about Hitlers imminent attack on Russia as of an unavoidable fact. They even enumerated the sizes and numbers of the German divisions massed for the invasion on the Russian border.

We have to ponder the likely reasons for the fact that Stalin's government kept stubbornly trying to refute these communications up to the very start of the military operations. They not only intensified the supply of the raw materials needed by Hitler but even sent families of the military to points near to the German border. Just a day before the German invasion there ar-


Gersztein ®

rived in Wilno a trainload of the wives and children of the Soviet garrison officers. The majority of them were then interned in the same buildings of the Jewish Colonizing Society on Subocz street in which subsequently I with my wife and daughter were kept for ten months in the labor camp H.K.P. 562.

Even more disastrously, (and the peoples of the Soviet Union paid a huge ransom of killed, wounded and imprisoned for this) Stalin, as we learn from the archives, literally proscribed, under the pretext that they might irritate Hitler, any directives that might have raised the battle readiness of the Russian armies in case of German invasion.

This incomprehensible behaviour of Stalin one could only explain as this tyrant's refusal to admit to the nation that, having started a World War through his treaty with Hitler, hoping to cause the mutual destruction of the capitalist countries of Europe, in actuality he pushed his country to catastrophe from which it was only saved by a miracle. This miracle was the entirely unexpected revolt of the Yugoslav military headed by general Simich in mid April of 1941, resulting in the downfall of the Stoyadonovich government under which Yugoslavia had joined the Nazi Axis. In response Hitler first subjected the capital of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, to cruel aerial bombardment and then hurriedly threw heavy tank forces (originally destined for his invasion of Russia) onto the Balkans in order to re-establish the former situation there.

Hitler was forced into this action to support Mussolini, his Axis confederate whose armies were greatly endangered by the united Greek-Yugoslav forces supported by the British divisions situated in Greece. In addition, these forces would also endanger the right flank of the German armies during their projected thrust deep into Russia.

The German tank divisions, showing exceptional fighting efficiency and supported by the mighty airforce moved south with lightning speed, crushing the resistance of Yugoslav and Greek forces. They also forced a hurried evacuation from Greece of the British divisions who vainly sought haven on the island od Crete on which the Germans (due to their undubitable superiority in the air) were able to land their forces - the nearby presence of British Naval forces notwithstanding. After the ensuing battles the British forces on Crete had to capitulate and were taken prisoner.

The mastery of Hitler's Balkan operation amazed the whole world at that time, I remember. We never suspected then that it would become the main reason for Hitler's downfall.

Because of the forced upon him Balkan operation, Hitler's invasion of Russia, projected as a summer campaign, began with a six weeks delay.

In consequence the German army, entirely unprepared for a winter campaign, was defeated in a decisive battle by the Russian "general Winter" at the gates of Moscow.

This fact did not only lethally predetermine the flow of Hitler's Russian compaign, it also decided the outcome of World War II.

By the irony of destiny Stalin, who at that time was more than eager to gratify his "friend" Hitler, expelled the Yugoslav ambassador from Russia because of the upheaval.

Interestingly Hitler in his last thoughts (as they came to us) apparently pointed out the Balkan campaign, undertaken to save Mussolini, as the cause of his ruin.

During the troubled winter of 1940-1941, if there was difference of opinions among us about Hitler's intentions, there was unanimity in the appraisal of the strength of the adversaries.

We, as well as most of the world were sure that Hitler's Germany, united in its desire to dominate the continent and inspired by its military victories was immeasurably stronger (not only in the military sense) than Stalin's Russia which was still groaning under his bloody terror. The majority of the general staff of the Soviet armies, including its chief, general Tukhachevsky, fell victim to Stalin's terror.

Dread of the awful empowerment of Hitler that would ensue upon his conquest of the enfeebled Soviet Union, not friendship for the mass murderer Stalin, motivated England when, in April of 1939, by guaranteeing Poland's

western frontiers it decisively opposed the realization of Hitler's plans in the east.
"The only hope is that the Germans might get entangled in the Russian turmoil" ventured to joke my witty brother-in-law Yermasha.

A t that time we were all unaware of the real character of Nazism. Raised on the romantic literature of the nineteenth century and in the tradition of respect towards everything German which was well deserved at the beginning of this century, we could not imagine that in the Germans we would face a monster which would swallow 95% of the Jewish population.
What state of mind motivated our strange unwillingness to look reality in the face? Guided by literature and religion, the majority of us were victims of our trust in the existance of fundamental moral values and of our belief that humanity's progress was not limited to technology alone.
Our delusion, which undoubtedly magnified the dimensions of our tragedy, was so deeply ingrained that even afterwards, when faced with the cruel facts which did not leave any doubt about Nazism's character, for a long time we stubbornly refused to believe in them - it just couldn't fit into our conception of the world.
It is therefore understandable that many of us, living from day to day under a "Damocles's Sword" - the perspective of ending our days in Stalin's arctic concentration camps, did not fear the coming of Germans very much.
"Come on, Munia (as I was called by those close to me) it won't be any worse. At least nobody will point a finger at you saying in bad Russian: "this one had store". Thus Kola the "big one" comforted my fears of the imminent coming of the Germans.
From early childhood Kola spent the summers in Germany, where he was caught by the first World War. During the time of the "Weimar" Germany he had lived a few years in Berlin, where he owned the publishing house "Grani". Kola could not give up his view of Germans as people who valued order and legality above all else - i.e. as he had known them. Poor guy, he never suspected that this time he would be confronted by completely different Germans and, before six weeks would go by, he would be killed by the Lithuanin executioners on order of the German Nazis.

Before coming to the stormy events of the spring of 1941 I want to note that in the fall of 1940 Eva, the only daughter of my sister Emma married Leon Szelubski during the 22nd year of her pitifully short life. Leon, or as we called him Lolek was born in Lodz, but fled to Wilno upon its occupation by the Germans. Lolek, a mechanical engineer, had received his education in Italy. Evochka had flowered into a charming, sweet natured and beautiful girl. The untimely death of her brother Gerochka was a cruel blow to her - they used to be tied by the tenderest of friendships. This great sorrow experienced at an early age tinted in sorrowful tones Eva's Polish language poetry - in it she mostly decried the sadness of human destiny.
Evochka and Lolek made a handsome and an apparently happy couple.

I would like to mention my very dear friend, doctor Alosha Perewozki here. At the time when Wilno was Polish Alosha was professionally in the doldrums, serving as an unpaid assistant in the internal disease clinic of professor Januszkiewicz and unable to acquire an adequate private practice. This was rather difficult in Wilno for any physician, and Alosha turned out to be a rather mediocre one. His wife Rachel, a pediatrician, did unpaid work in the Jewish charitable institutions. Thus the family lived mostly on Rachel's income as a co-owner of "Chopen", the largest brewery in eastern Poland; this was hard for proud Alosha to accept.

In the setting of these circumstances Alosha turned out to be one of the very few Jewish physicians who expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Bolsheviks when the latter had occupied Wilno. The Soviet Public Health authorities immediately appointed him director of the epidemiologic clinic in Antokol. In Alosha's wife Rachel the circumstances described by me evoked a response which demonstrated that in spite of the horror of what was taking place in Russia at that time, the star of Socialism was still bright for some.
Persuaded that Socialism in Lithuania had put an end to the doldrums of her beloved husband, she literally broke down under the feeling of guilt for having (as co-owner of the brewery) lived for a long time on "unearned income", exploiting the workers.
The outbreak of the war soon terminated Alosha's career but in the ensuing tragic cicumstances Rachel to the end of her days was unable to overcome the consequences of this delusion.

Coming back to our lives: the winter of 1941 was full of dread of deportation to the "white bears" - this fear was heightened by the following circumstances. My brother-in-law Yermasha would come from Antokol almost every day to visit his sister Tatiana Kaplanski who lived with us at that time. Prior to the nationalization of his business Yermasha gave financial support to some former clients of his. These aristocratic Polish landowners had to abandon their estates in September of 1939 because of the Russian occupation and took refuge in Wilno which for a short time became the capital of democratic Lithuania. From the time of the "Sovietization" of Lithuania, however, they lived in daily expectation of being deported.
I remember that one of these landowners named Skirmunt (the nephew of the Polish ambassador to London, Alexander Skirmunt) would rush to us daily to warn Yermasha that: "There are railroad cars waiting on Rosa".
On the other hand I remember that during these anxious days we would find moral support from Perella's former governess, Genia Minkiewicz; both she and her husband were communist sympathizers. She would assure us: "decent people like you have nothing to fear from the Bolsheviks."

The deportation to camps of the "socially harmful elements" from the Wilno area, so fearfully foreseen by us, began just one week prior to the German invasion. Officers of the N.K.V.D. began the deportation of nationlized businessmen, factory owners, landowners and landlords as well as criminals and prostitutes, according to previously prepared lists. At that time we did not suspect that as far as the Jews were concerned, the deported were the lucky ones.
After a few months, according to the agreement between the Polish government in exile in London and the Soviet Union - (the Sikorski- Stalin agreement), all the deported Polish citizens (except for the 10-12,000 officers massacred in the Katyn forest), were set free from the Soviet camps.
My sister-in-law Rachil Cholem and her husband Yermasha avoided deportation by running out from the service entry when the N.K.V.D. knocked on their front door. Only partially dressed they came running to us at dawn and stayed with us until the arrival of the Germans. My brother-in-law couldn't suspect then that he had run towards his own doom, since he was one of the 300 wealthy Wilno Jews whom the Germans arrested and shot in the first days of July of 1941, immediately upon their occupation of the city.
At the beginning of the deportations of "the harmful elements" I personally went to hide at my sister Emma's, but since apparently I was not on the first deportation list I soon returned home.

A few days later began the events expected by everybody except for the government of Stalin: on the eve of Sunday, June 22nd 1941, Hitler's armies invaded his ally Russia without declaring war.

Despite the warnings from everywhere about the coming German invasion and even in spite of the information of their own reconnaissance about the massing of huge German forces at the border, the Germans caught the Soviets completely unawares.

As I mentioned before any precautionary measures were strictly forbidden by Stalin personally so as not to provoke Hitler. Because of this idiotic and fatal for his people policy of the "great" Stalin the Germans did not encounter any organized resistance. Enjoying the full mastery of the air after having destroyed by swift bombing almost the whole Russian Air Force while it was still on the ground, the Germans were able to destroy all the Soviet frontier armies, taking prisoner those hundreds of thousands who couldn't run away.

Our city, situated more than a hundred miles east of the border was taken by the Germans on the third day, the morning of June 24th 1941, after they had crossed the river Niemen, a serious water barrier.

The Germans had subjected our city to bombardment from the very first day of the war. On the night of June 22nd a German bomb fell on the house of my wife's mother and brother Naum in Antokol (where we intended to move at one time) wounding lightly the mother and the brother fatally.

During the two days preceding the occupation of Wilno by the Germans we witnessed the Russian's frenzied, chaotic evacuation, made more difficult by the unceasing bombardment of the diver-bombers whose wail terrified the population forcing us to seek protection in the basements which we used as bomb shelters.

Some scenes I remember:

All the military running east on foot, including the pilots who couldn't manage to reach their planes in time...

One German Messerschmidt shooting down the numerically ten times larger squadrons of those Russian planes who managed to get airborne...

To complete the picture I should add that the majority of the Jewish youths who tried to run east on foot or bike were forced to return since they were outstripped by the lightning movement of the German tanks and motorized infantry.

Among those forced to return were my niece Eva and her husband Lolek who were caught near the town of Oshmiany, Vova, the future husband of Perella who reached Minsk on his bike before being outstripped by the Germans (his friend was killed by the German strafing of the refugees on the roads) and my former employee Owsey Wapner - to mention just a few.

If one considers these facts in addition to the circumstance that, even though we were aware of Hitler's pathological antiSemitism, we were unable to imagine the bloody nightmare soon to be imposed upon us by the Nazis, one can obtain an answer to the frequently posed question: "Why did't we (though encumbered by family ties) leave our homes at the approach of the Nazis and flee?"

Since there exists a rich historical literature portraying Hitler's invasion of Russia (the campaign "Barbarossa") in these pages I will limit myself to the description of the destiny of the Lithuanian Jewry. I have to begin with a comprehensive description of the factors which determined the character and the dimensions of our tragedy:

a) The Germans arrived with previously worked out, detailed plans not only for our extermination but also for the way how, by exploiting the weakness of hu-

man nature, they could do so with a minimum of resistance from the condemned and how they could carry out their murderous work with almost no publicity.
b) The Lithuanians zealously helped the Germans and in many cases surpassed them in their cruelty.

However, before going into the above I want to describe our personal lot in that period. As mentioned previously we were in many ways obliged for our miraculous survival to a Pole who lived in our neighborhood. Boleslaw Poddany, born in Poznan (a city famous for their antiSemitism) became a faithful customer and a good friend of mine when he realized that I gave him honest and fair service. Poddany's business was nationalized at the same time as mine was and at the moment described by me he was hiding from the N.K.V.D. who were looking for him.

On June 22nd, 1941, Poddany appeared at my appartment with the news that war has bagun. "The Germans will be here in a couple of days", he added, " but do not worry, I feel it is my obligation as a honorable man to save people such as you". It should be noted that Poddany kept his promise - fortunately, as we shall see, subsequently he had a special opportunity to help: having received his enterprise (which had been nationalized by the bolsheviks) back from the Germans, he commenced the repair of German military vehicles in his workshops, and thus got incorporated into the German military machine. The first few days after the entrance of the Germans, fearing anti-Jewish excesses I stayed at Poddany's house at his insistence. When nothing much happened I returned home. At the beginning the authorities confined themselves (supposedly to protect their military from terrorist attacks) to taking about ten Jewish hostages (who never returned), imposing a curfew and prohibiting to turn on the lights in the dwellings.

Circumstances were entirely different (immediately after the coming of the Germans) for the Jewish population of Lithuania. There, in contrast to the areas occupied by the Germans but with mostly Byelorussian population, the Lithuanians (immediately and on their own initiative) bestially killed all the Jews in the small towns, including babies, women and old people - and plundered their belongings.
This was the destiny of the Jews of the town of Koltiniany, where twenty years before I was amazed at the great neighbourly regard, based upon mutual respect and trust in the relations between the Jews of the township and the Lithuanian peasants of the surrounding villages.
In the city of Kowno the coming of the Germans was marked by a pogrom perpetrated by the Lithuanians in the suburb of "Slobodka" with thousands of Jewish victims.
In Wilno, where the gentile population of both the city and of the surrounding villages was not Lithuanian, it was the Lithuanian soldiers and police, (led by some Germans) who massacred some of the Jewish population which, because of the influx of refugees from the parts of Poland occupied by the Germans in 1939, had reached a hundred thousands.

Even though during the first days after the occupation the decrees of the city commander, Kollonel Zehnpfenig related to the population of Wilno as a whole, this situation changed drastically with the arrival at the end of June of the "Gestapo", which under the command of the Austrian Wolf took over the huge (built by the Russians) building of the district court, and the arrival of the Special Command of the S.S. whose headquarters took over the building of the Polish Bank (built by the Poles)- both on the main street of the city, named Mickiewicza by the Poles.

With the assistance of the simultaneously created Lithuanian political police under the command of the Lithuanian Andreyunas the headquarters of which was placed on the Wilenska street No. 12, the Germans commenced the mass arrests and executions of the Jews - these had been rather disorganized to begin with.

But even before the arrival of the Gestapo, in addition to the arrests of the Jews performed by the Lithuanian police, frequently (as in my case) because of denounciation by Gentile neighbours, in the suburbs there were cases of German marauders who broke into houses to rob well-to-do Jewish households. During one such robbery whose victim was my sister Anya I had suffered a big financial loss.

Having assured the robber that she had no jewelry my sister Anya, fearing that she might be subjected to a body search threw out of the window the one and half carat diamond ring and the diamond dust covered platinum watch which I entrusted to her when I was afraid of the bolsheviks and which she was wearing under her girdle.

In July of 1941 we witnessed a pogrom, with hundreds of Jews killed in the "Novgorod" suburb - the shelter of professional beggars and of the Jewish criminal element - as well as the chaotic arrests on the streets of isolated Jewish passer-by's.

Thus perished the husband of my sister Emma, Aaron Moyseyevich Eisurowicz. According to witnesses he was seized on Portowa street by driving by Germans.

To make my description of the events of the horrifyingly memorable Sunday of June 29th, 1941, more understandable I should mention that for the last few months the front room of our apartment was not occupied by Kaplanski's chief, Sushinski any more, but by a comissar of the Soviet police, the former attorney Panowski who managed to run away before the coming of the Germans. Since the police was an organ of the N.K.V.D. the manager of our house, the Polish attorney Trzeciak had (upon my request) locked Panowski's room and put a wax seal upon the double door.

I should also add that the apartment of our neighbour across the landing, Dr. Lukowski was occupied by a refugee from the city of Memel, the Lithuanian Labanauskas.

This event, the first in a chain in which my life was hanging on a hair and I survived thanks to help which came from where help could be least expected, occurred on the fifth day after the coming of the Germans. Since the orders of the authorities did not yet have their anti-Jewish character I decided to walk out of town to Antokol, where from I brought back with me my wife's sister, Rachil.

Because of the curfew and the prohibition of turning on any light in the apartment, we and the Kaplanskis (husband, wife and their grown-up son Shelik) went to sleep around nine o'clock in the evening.

We all were awakened around midnight by thundering knocks of rifle butts upon our front door.

When, overcoming terror I opened the door, a bayonet-armed Lithuanian guard unit led by a German officer plunged into our roomy entry hall.

"You had the lights on, you signalled to the Russians" accused me the German officer, blinking a flashlight in front of my eyes. When I began to deny this, showing that we took the fuse out so as not to put the light on by mistake, a civilian Lithuanian with a bag over his shoulder jumped out from the crowd. Breaking the wax seal securing the door this Lithuanian entered the room previously occupied by the comissar of the Soviet police and after some time came out with a metallic N.K.V.D. emblem in his hand which he triumphantly handed to the German officer. "All the men living in this apartment get dressed immediately" came the loud order of the German officer.

I remember that I was like turned to stone while my family hugged me with loud sobbing in farewell.

The complete darkness in the street was only interrupted by the take off of illumination rockets when I, David Kaplanski, his son Shelik, the Lithuanian guard unit and the Lithuanian with the bag mentioned before were brought to the police precinct which from the Czar's time on was situated on the corner of Tatarska street and the Georgievski avenue (named Mickiewicza street by the Poles).

After our arrival at the police station where Lithuanian students with white armbands carried out the functions of high police officials, the Lithuanian with the bag pointing at me and the Kaplanskis declared that we, by putting on the light in our apartment were giving signals to the Russians.

My assurances given in Russian that I was a victim of the Bolsheviks as a nationalized businessman was not understood by the students. I do not know what impression Shelik's declaration that as a son of well to do parents he had to pay for his university education made on the students. But here happened something that we could least of all expect. To our defense came forward a Lithuanian soldier from our guard unit who declared that patrolling the street they had seen the light not in our windows but those of our neighbour Labanauskas - the Lithuanian with the shoulder bag. However when they knocked on his door Labanauskas had persuaded the German officer that the light which they had noticed from the street was turned on not by him but by the communist Jews, his neighbours. Because of this declaration the students detained Labanauskas who tried to slip away and set me and the Kaplanskis free. Because of the curfew we had to wait for dawn before going home.

Remaining at the police station we had to witness horrifying scenes - the Lithuanian policemen were bringing Jews they had arrested - one seized after they had found a bag of flour in his house, another for a few pieces of leather. They were cruelly beaten and incarcerated.

Especially sadistic was one huge policeman who would taunt with each cruel blow "this you get from your daddy Stalin".

This did not conclude our adventure, however, during that night we were to undergo still other terrifying experiences.

To our horror, shortly before dawn the police station was visited by a unit of the ultra Nazi "S.S.". Learning that we were Jews, the reason for whose presence the Lithuanian students could not explain, since they did not know German, the S.S.men lunged at us rabidly.

Pushing us face to the wall, they searched us with revolvers to the backs of our heads.

Finding in the pocket of the elder Kaplanski's pants (used as toilet paper) some Lithuanian printed matter prohibiting lighting fires in forests during the summer, the S.S.men, threatening that they would "niederknaulen, niedermahlen" us, demanded that we translate the text of these questionable documents into German, which Shelik did with my help.

Here for the second time on that night help came from where it could be least expected:

"Where did you learn German so well?" one of the S.S.men asked me suddenly.

"I am a graduate of the Berlin Business School" I answered.

Apparently amazed by my answer the S.S. man enquired "Did you know the coffehouse "Kranzler"?" When I replied that I have visited "Kranzler's" on Friedrichstrasse many times, the S.S.man said "I was the "Kranzler's"

violinist" and after a short silence started to repeat loudly "But you are not a Jew, you are not a Jew". The Lithuanians were then ordered to release us.
Our families greeted us as the miraculous survivors from the world of the dead when we stumbled home at dawn.

In the first days of July, '41 the Germans demanded from the block superintentants lists of rich Jews living in their apartment buildings, all of whom were then shot. Fortunately for us, our superintendant, a Polish lady attorney named Trzeciak did not put on the list myself nor my brother-in-law Naum Zlatin, who also lived on her block. However, my other brother-in-law Yeremey Saulovich Cholem as well as my cousin Kasriel Gershater (grandson of my grandmother Mera by her first marriage) were not so fortunate - they were the ones among our relatives who were included in the 300 people who perished in that so called "action" (aktzye).
After a few days the German "Einsatzgruppen" began to seize abruptly Jewish men encountered in the street; one of these was the seventeen-year-old Vova Gdud, my future son-in-law and father of my three grandchildren, who was one of the two survivors of Ponary. After being penned, guarded by the Lithuanian police, for a whole night in the city park "Bernardinka", five hundred young Jews were taken to Ponary where executioners of the Lithuanian Ypatinga put them in small groups at the edge of huge ditches and shot them. The story of Vova's first of many miraculous survivals as well as his family's tragedy will be described in a subsequent chapter in Vova's own words.

At first we did not believe the tales of the few survivors of the Ponary executions. I strongly doubt if our believing them would have changed anything - the forces were much too unequal, but anyway we refused to face the truth. The truth was too horrible, too contradictory of all the elementary humanitarian principles with which we were inculcated and of which we were unable to let go. It was very hard for us to abandon the illusion, so deeply ingrained in us, that humanity must have made progress in the field of ethics as well as in that of technology. This recasting process needed time whereas our enemies did not delay the realization of their bloody schemes.

During the first couple of months we stubbornly refused to give credence to those few who managed to return from Ponary, declaring their tales of what was happening there the sign of psychotic delirium - so much did it seem monstruous and impossible. When one of the two survivors of Ponary, my future son-in-law Vova Gdud reached his home, only his parents believed him, all the neighbours thought him insane. One should note that in our case this procrastination was deadly - before we got oriented to what was going on in reality, our enemies had time to annihilate a large part of those who would have been able to put up some resistance. On the pretext that they needed workers they were able to send to their death a large part of the physically able Jewish population. To begin with, to weaken the elements of the Jewish community who might offer resistance, these murderous initial "aktzyas" were directed exclusively against men.
The Lithuanian police, which in the matter of our extermination showed exceptional eagerness and cruelty, would consecutively surround whole quarters and "grab" young able bodied Jewish men, assuring them that they were taking them to work but in reality taking them to the Lukiszki prison and from there to Ponary.
Insidiously, in order to make us fall more easily into their traps, they at first would let those they grabbed go home after working. I myself was let go after, with other Jews of our area, I had spent the night unloading cement from freight cars at the railroad station.

The "khapuny" (grabbers), as the Jewish population had nicknamed them took to their death tens of thousands of Jewish men, among them my brother Yefim, Sasha Mintz, the husband of my sister Anya, my cousin Kola and many of our friends and acquaintances.

The extermination of the Jewry of Wilno took on a reasoned and strategically planned character with the arrival at the beginning of August 1941 of the civil authorities in the person of the area commissar Hingst and of his deputy for Jewish affairs, Murer.

Immediately there came a downpour of edicts (nonobservance of which was mercilessly punishable by death) aimed at the easy identification of the Jews, at the utter limitation of the scope of our movements and at our isolation from the rest of the population.

The first edict of the military commander of the city, colonel Zehnpfenig which ordered Jews to wear an armband marked by a star of David was changed by the order of Hingst obliging us to wear the so called "late" the yellow star-shaped patch at first on the breast only, then also on the back. At the same time we were forbidden to use the sidewalks, we were allowed to walk only on the pavement (in the gutter).

The hours during which we were allowed to be on the street were greatly shortened and we could buy food only during the couple of hours designated for us.

As Perella, (a twelve-year old at that time) remembers it, not understanding the ominous portents, she pluckily attempted to make light of these indignities when talking to Kira, the son of our apartment house janitor Nikolai, a gentile. She told him that probably with time we would make the "lates" (the yellow patches) more fashionable by embroidering flowers on them.

A "Judenrat" was formed in the city as early as July of 1941. Into it entered the Jewish representatives of the professions, the intellectuals, the middle class and the pre-war community organisations.

It was headed by the engineer Saul Trotsky.

Concomitantly with the promulgation of the decrees directed against the Jewish population, one of Murer's first actions as Hingst's delegate was the summoning of all the members of the Judenrat to his office - it was situated on the Georgyi Prospect (Mickiewicza) in the pre World War I building of the Government Bank.

As recounted by the Judenrat members later, Murer in a brutal speech full of unbridled hatred and contempt demanded from the Jewish community many millions of rubles as a "contribution". Murer threatened that 5000 Jewish heads would roll unless thy delivered what he demanded.

Murer's speech, especially its unbridled brutality was so horrifying that Saul Trotsky had a heart attack and lost his consciousness right there. To bring their unconscious chairman home the members of the Judenrat were forced to carry him in their arms for a few kilometers since Murer had forbidden them to use a carriage. Since there was no possibility of obtaining the demanded sum in cash, Murer agreed to accept the payment of the "Contribution" in jewelry. I remember that both my wife and I gave our golden wedding rings and my wife's sister Vera gave her pearl necklace, a nuptial gift of her husband's.

The bestiality of Murer, the main architect of the merciless annihilation of th Wilno Jewry - the murder of defenseless and innocent men, women and children - appeared most vividly in his treatment of the 86 year old Doctor Yakow Wygodski. Dr. Wygodski, for decades the steadfast defender of the Wilno Jewry's interests, represented the latter in the Polish Sejm (the Senate).

He was particularly reknowned for his selfless efforts during the three and one half year long World War I occupation of our city by the German army. At that time the decrees of the occupying authorities completely paralyzed the supply of food for the city and a large proportion of the Jewish poor was dying of starvation.

Dr. Wygodski courageously approached Murer in his office to protest strongly the cruelty of the German authorities toward the peaceful Jewish population. Murer personally threw him down the stairs and then sent him to the Lukiszki prison, from where Dr. Wygodski never came back.

The executions of the Jews, usually in large groups, were performed by a special task force of Lithuanians, the so-called "Ypatinga", led by a member of the Gestapo - in the beginning Goring was the Gestapo man in charge of the killings, then in succession the chief murderers were Schweinberger, Martin Weiss and finally Kittel.

The executions were performed in a wood in the locality "Ponary" situated on the road five kilometers from the city where the Russians, intending to build oil reservoirs, had dug huge ditches.

The huge "Lukiszki prison" which now served as the assembly and staging point on the way to "Ponary" for the Jews had been built by the Russians at the beginning of the century.

Before I can come back to the description of our lives in the framework of the events which brought annihilation to the Jewish community of Wilno, I want to attempt to put in correct perspective the accusation that we did not resist enough, that we went "like sheep to the slaughter" during the three years of the Nazi scourge.

These accusations can not be left unanswered, especially since they are often uttered by Jews - as I witnessed during my visit to Israel.

In the pages of the respected American Journal "New Yorker" the writer Hannah Arendt (a Jewess) after returning from the trial of Eichmann saw in this lack of resistance a circumstance which mitigated the guilt of our executioners.

One has to admit that the most shining pages in the five hundered year chronicle of the Wilno Jewish community were not written at its death, (as did the final days of the Warsaw Ghetto) but during its life when it was the center of Jewish religious thought and national movements during hundreds of years.

I have to admit that, by resisting in only a few cases the Wilno Jewry permitted the Germans to fulfill their bloody plans without much uproar or undue publicity.

However, in our defence one should point out that we were not the first nor the only ones:

Even earlier Stalin had succeeded in crucifying the magnificent Russian people by a similar tactic of deceit, limitless villainy and merciless cruelty.

Like in Russia, we also had our traitors whom the Germans had lured by promising them life and who, acting from the inside, suppressed any attempts at resistance.

The hopelessness of the resistance was emphasized in our case by the fact (which for some reason we do not mention) that the Germans were not alone, they were helped in their bloody efforts (with few exceptions) by our gentile neighbours, especially the Lithuanians.

We will have to return to the causes of this. But I want to underscore one circumstance here: our Christian neighbours did not hate us because we were worse than they were. The Gentiles tried to convince us of this during many centuries and attach to us the moral "yellow patch" of imputed inferiority.

However, after having witnessed that they, the "superior ones" kicked us when we were down, that we did not kill their children but they killed ours - we are entitled to declare cathegorically to the Gentiles once and for all that it is time to end this base calumny.
Returning to the causes of the Germans relatively easy "success", I want to point out one more fact which simplified the carrying out of their carefully worked out, detailed bloody plans for our annihilation.
They found us disarmed not only physically but also psychologically.
At the time when the noose around our necks was swiftly tightening, for a long time we completely refused to believe that the Germans would be capable of mass executions of innocent people, including women and children.

As we now know, in the areas destined for German colonization, among them Lithuania, Hitler (as well as his chief theoretician of racism, Alfred Rosenberg, who governed all the conquered eastern territories) were in the process of achieving the following goals:
For the Germans the role of masters.
For the native populations the role of pariahs.
For the Jews living there merciless extermination.
I would like to point out here the two circumstances which had delayed the realisation of the Nazi's plans of our general extermination.
The first one was their reluctance to display to the world Nazism's horrendous visage. Hitler's murderous gang understood that they could not declare themselves the defenders of Europe's cultural heritage and invite the other nations to join them in a crusade against the Bolshevik barbarians while at the same time openly murdering women and children most horribly. This circumstance demanded the application of a most carefully thought out artfulness which would both permit the Nazis to carry out their murderous work quietly, without publicity and, most importantly, avoid resistance from their intended victims. The other circumstance which somewhat mitigated the ardor of the Nazi murderers was the need of the military authorities servicing the swiftly advancing German armies for a work force and for qualified workers in particular.
Many of the Jews were artisans and some of the crafts (like for instance the furriers) were all Jewish. The furriers were very important for the German military machine because of the swiftly approaching winter.
The above circumstances influenced even the tactics of Murer in carrying out the Nazi's murderous plans.
Though during August, just as before, the Lithuanian "Khapuny" would surround at night a whole block to search out and grab men, they would spare those working for the German military.
To protect themselves from the "Khapuny", Jewish men started feverishly to look for work in the many establishments of the German military support system who gave certificates to those accepted for work. However these certificates did'nt always assure protection.

When the "Khapuny" burst into our apartment one night, they accepted as valid my photograph-bearing certificate issued me by the German military organization, H.K.P. "Heeres Kraftfahr Park" which declared me a qualified worker, but refused to recognize the certificte of Kaplanski, which had no photograph. His wife, Tatyana Saulowna (Cholem) succeded to buy her husband out - her pleadings on bended knee didn't make any impression but the gold watch which she finally thought to offer the "Khapuny" did the trick.
From mid July on, I worked as stockroom keeper in the vehicle repair shop situated on Wilenska 23 (next to the city pharmacy) belonging to my friend

Boleslaw Poddany. This repair shop was incorporated into the military vehicle repair system - the Heeres Kraftfahr Park - the H.K.P. 562, which was headed by the German army major Plagge and whose main workshops were situated in the Technical School built by the Poles on Antokol. Subsequently, this circumstance made our survival possible.

Acting according to the detailed plan for our extermination, the Nazis first eliminated through the "khapuny" maneuver a large part of our men. Murer's next step, aimed at transforming us into a demoralized multitude, entirely incapable of any organized resistance, was to deprive us of our leaders.
In late August of 1941 the Gestapo, led by Schweinberger, suddenly appeared at the #6 Strashuna street during a meeting of our Judenrat, seized its chairman Saul Trotsky and the sixteen other members present and sent them all to be executed.
This was followed by an "aktzya", nicknamed "provokatzya" (libel) which, as well as all of those following, was aimed not only against the men but also against women and children.

On August 31st, 1941, a proclamation signed by the Gebiets Komissar Hingst was plastered upon the streets of the city. In it the latter announced that since in the Jewish quarter there were shots fired against the passing German soldiers, Hingst was taking the strictest measures against the Jewish population to assure the safety of the German army.
These measures were soon to be seen - during the following night Germans and Lithuanians surrounded the area of the historic Jewish ghetto and carted the whole population, including women and children and numbering about 8000, to Ponary where they were all executed.
This "aktzya", besides the bestial murder of many thousands of peaceful people regardless of their sex and age, had another goal - the vacating of an area for the planned by the Nazis "Ghetto"; subsequently all surviving Jews living in other parts of the city were herded into it.
One should stress that both the "provokatzya" aktzya as well as the following mass murder of the Jews of Wilno was perpetrated upon the initiative and command of the Gebietskomissariat; Murer, the delegate in charge of Jewish affairs, played a decisive role in it all.
I stress this fact because in Austria after the war the despicable decree of a jury which found Murer innocent was met by thundering applause and, according to eye-witnesses Murer, the chief organizer of the bestial murder of thousands of innocent men, women and children was triumphantly carried out of the courthouse in the arms of his compatriots.
What happened in the hall of an Austrian Court speaks strongly for the view that, even though when the time of payment for the Nazi crimes came, the Austrians hurried to declare themselves victims of the Nazi regime, the fact that both Hitler and Murer as well as the vast majority of our Gestapo executioners were Austrian may not have been an accidental coincidence.

This "Provokatzya" aktzya was so horrifying that Boleslaw Poddany, fearing that it may not be limited to the exclusively Jewish quarter and might be repeated in other areas, suggested that I with my wife and daughter should spend the night at his workshop which was located just a few minutes walk from our apartment. What happened next characterizes the depth my wife's love for her mother: Ida insisted that I with Perella should go to spend the night in the relative safety of the H.K.P. workshop while she herself stayed with her Mother and aunt Sara; they lived with us since the destruction of their house by the German bomb which had killed Nochem on June 22nd - Ida would not desert them.

Anticipating the coming storm we used the short respite after the "Provokatzya" to convey to Poddany (who lived nearby and whom I trusted completely) our furs, the best of our clothes and linen as well as our jewelry and valuables.
Poddany justified my trust and to this cirumstance we owe the fact that during the following three years of captivity we did not suffer hunger. Through the sale of these objects we were even able to help those few of our relatives who survived the subsequent bloody "Aktzyas" which carried off almost all of our families.

In August, after the manager of the Antokol house in which Rachil and Yermasha lived informed the Gestapo, they carried off, together with Yermasha's huge collection of antique Russian china, five wooden crates of our china and crystal which we had sent there during the time of the bolsheviks.
Also in August we had to hand in our warm feather bedding. The commmision of experts which inspected the well-to-do Jewish apartments took away as valuable art objects our large cobalt vase, the two antique gobelins and a few English china plates from the walls.
On September 5th, according to the injunction which ordered Jews to give up their gold, silver and jewelry, I stood in a long line at the local police station to hand in our table silver..
I mention these details to show that the Nazis had a detailed, previously established plan of robbing us before we were to be killed.

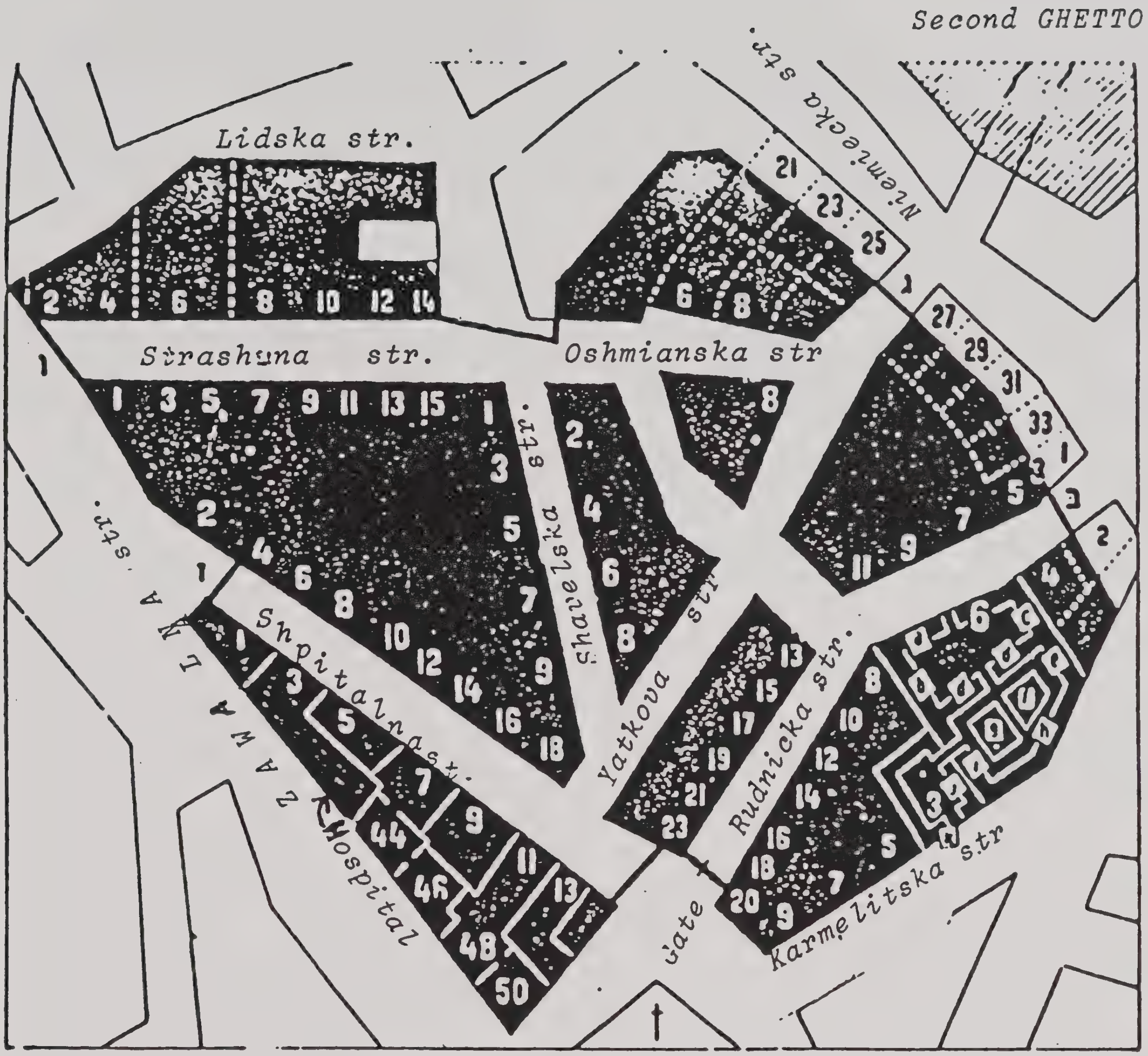
On September 6th our maid Vera came running into the H.K.P. workshop where I worked with my wife's message to come home immediately. The Lithuanian police who came to march our family to the "ghetto", newly decreed for the Jews, gave us half an hour to get ready. We could take only the things we could personally carry. Hastily, having packed some pillows, bedding and clothing we left our home. I, my wife, daughter, mother-in-law and her sister were heavily burdened by large packs when we walked out into the street where we merged with the slowly moving crowd of Jews driven by the Lithuanian police up Zawalna street in the direction of the "ghetto".
On the way we were joined by my wife's sister Vera with her husband, also her brother David with his wife and daughter.
We were exhausted from the heaviness of the burdens and sweaty because the day was sunny and hot and we were wearing our winter clothing. Perella's pack had become untied and she was complaining that the pillow and electrical cord she carried were falling out. Perella still remembers that I was upbraiding her for her "unfeeling selfishness" - I carried a huge pack and could not understand why she couldn't manage.
We finally staggered to the corner of Zawalna and Strashuna streets.
There the Gestapo chased us in with yells and threats into the Strashuna street which had been emptied of its original inhabitants by the "libel aktzye - the provokatzye". Since we were one of the early arrivals we and the Zlatins were able to occupy a room on the second floor of the first house on the right side - Strashuna #1. Standing in the street I finally saw my mother, my sister Anya with her daughter Shela and my sister Emma with her daughter Eva and son-in-law Lolek.
They all squeezed into our room with their packs. During the day huge crowds of Jews continued to be chased into Strashuna street; they swiftly overcrowded the houses of the seven small streets (Strashuna, Yatkova, Shavelska, Shpitalna, parts of Rudnicka and Oshmianska) which the Germans earmarked as the area of the "Large Ghetto".

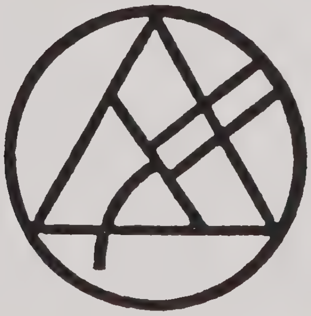
Originally Lidski alley, parallel to Strashuna, was also included in the "Large Ghetto". However, that evening the Germans decided to exclude the Lidski alley from the ghetto and, according to that decision, all the Jews who had crowded into apartments on Lidski after they were chased into the ghetto, were driven on that same night to the Lukishki prison from which only very few were able to return.
In addition to the "Large ghetto" situated on the three little streets adjoining the "Great Synagogue" (the synagogue was defiled by the Germans who made a warehouse out of it), a "Little ghetto" was also established.
The two ghettos were separated by the Niemiecka street. The houses on both sides of this important thoroughfare were not included in the "ghetto".

By squeezing into the few streets (where previously had lived in crowded conditions about 8000 of the Jewish poor) the Jewish population of many tens of thousands - even though from some quarters of the city the Germans did not take the Jews to the "ghetto", but rather to Ponary for general execution - the Germans created an unimaginable congestion.
The number of people who lived in our modest size, narrow, elongated room of about 2 by 8 meters grew to 26 by evening.
Among the newly arrived were our acquaintances, the family of Felix Desler (before the first World War the owner of a large hardware business in Wilno), his wife Lubov Samoylovna, his son Sala and Sala's wife Rega, a refugee from Lodz. Regrettably, Sala later deservedly acquired a very infamous reputation.
The following nights we had to sleep huddled on the dirty floor, some lying down, some sitting since there was not enough space for everybody to stretch out.
All the outlets of the streets connecting the ghetto with the rest of the world (with the exception of the Rudnicki street outlet where a gate was placed) were blocked by tall brick walls.
The Germans placed a placard on the gate bearing a large warning to the rest of the population about "DANGER of CONTAGION" - "SEUCHE GEFAHR".
I remember that the horror of the inhuman conditions in the ghetto were made more bearable by my hope that here at last the Germans would let us be, that finally here our lives would at least be safe. But as we will see I was cruelly mistaken in this too.

To begin with the Germans organized in the ghetto a Jewish police force installing as its chief Yakov Gens, not a native of Wilno. Gens, a former officer of the Lithuanian army, came from the Kowno area of Lithuania; he was married to a Lithuanian who, together with their daughter, lived outside of the ghetto on the "Aryan side". During his youth Gens used to belong to the militaristic Zionist organisation "Beitar".
Officially Gens was nominated by the "Judenrat", the surviving members of which got reorganized in the ghetto under the chairmanship of Anatol Fried, the former director of the community bank.
However, the fact that Yacov Gens, a man completely unknown in our city could immediately push the Judenrat aside, usurping all the power in the ghetto, points out clearly that Gens was leveraged into this position by our mortal enemies who needed him for the purpose of achieving our annihilation - after all they had prepared for Gens's installation by the execution of almost the whole Judenrat headed by Saul Trotsky.
These fact and many others which we will soon see should preclude any doubts about the fatal role that Yakov Gens played in our tragedy; nevertheless, I have to admit that there is no unanimity among the survivors of the Hitlerian cataclysm about Gens's role.

MAP of the GHETTO of WILNO


Second GHETTO
Lidska str.
Niemiecka str.
Strashuna str.
Oshmianska str
Shavelska str.
Yatkova str
Rudnicka str.
Karmelitska str
Shpitalna str.
Hospital
ZAWALNA str.
Gate



Emblem of the Vilna Ghetto

The clarification of this question would, I feel, explain why the Jewish community of Wilno, so outstanding during its life ended its days less so.

Some facts from our family chronicle:
My brother Yefim's wife Fania and her younger daughter Lila came to the ghetto from the Esterowicz family house on the Wilkomirski street together with my Mother, Anya and Shela ; they found space in the room in which Fania's parents were located. Her older daughter Dora who lived for the last two years in Kowno, as well as her son Lazar (Lasya), succeded in making their way deep into Russia.

The inhuman conditions notwithstanding, the life in both of the ghettoes in which about 40,000 Jews had been herded (30,000 in the first one and 10,000 in the second) was beginning to get organized.
Since at the very beginning of the German occupation in July of 1941 doctor Luba Cholem (the sister-in-law of my brother-in-law Yermasha) succeded in obtaining from the chief of the German Medical Service protective certificates for all of the Jewish physicians of Wilno - the latter suffered almost no losses during the following bloody "aktzyas". This circumstance, together with the fact that the Municipal Jewish Hospital was situated inside the first ghetto, made it possible to speedily organize wide medical services and take preventive measures against the epidemics threatened by the extreme congestion.

The Jews who worked in the German military establishments (I among them) began at once to leave the ghetto each morning and go to their place of work in groups walking on the roadway.
The workshop repairing the German military vehicles (H.K.P.), situated on 23 Wilenska street, was managed by my friend Boleslaw Poddany; initially eighteen Jews worked there besides the sixty gentiles. In addition to myself I managed to get employment there for my brother-in-law Mula Gerstein and the husband of my cousin Nina Sheniuk, Yakov (Kuba) Rotstein.
The work in the H.K.P. workshops secured the obtaining of the vital "Facharbeiterschein" - the qualified worker's certificate. We worked six days a week, from six in the morning till six in the evening with a half hour interruption during which we received a portion of soup which was brought from the central workshop situated in the building of the Technical school in Antokol.
In addition to this the fact of leaving the ghetto and the contact with the gentile population gave us a chance, (by selling some pieces of clothing and linen) of acquiring food which we then endeavored to bring into the ghetto for our families - a perilous undrtaking.
Since the young Desler held an important position in the Jewish police, the family Desler soon left our room moving into spacious premises on number 4 Rudnicka street where the Judenrat was also located.
I remember that the elder Desler, speaking with a German accent, told me proudly that his "Zala" had received a permit from the Gestapo to freely move around the city without wearing the yellow "late" (patch).
I did not suspect then that this implied "Zala's" agreement to become an obedient tool of our enemies in the enterprise of our extermination. Logic tells us also that for the enlisting of Desler as its agent, the Gestapo needed the help of Desler's immediate superior, his chief Yakov Gens.

My illusion that in the ghetto we might have a measure of personal safety was disabused as early as on the 9th day of our stay there.
On September 15th of 1941, with the subterfuge that people not possessing the "Facharbeiterschein" were to be moved to the second ghetto with their families, about 2000 Jews were sent to Ponary .

One should mention that the predatory character of the Jewish police became visible during this first bloody aktzya of the ghetto when, inspired by their chief Yakov Gens, they used deceit and showed impardonable diligence in sending their brethern to their deaths. I remeber that on our street during that evening the assistant of Gens, the German Jew Oberhardt was especially energetic.

Since I worked in H.K.P. this aktzya didn't touch me nor my family.

However, during that time we too were badly afflicted.

At this indescribale moment our daughter fell ill and since her illness had some symptoms of scarlet fever my friend, doctor Alosha Perevozki notified the medical authorities; Perella had to be transported to the municipal infectious barrack situated outside the confines of the ghetto, at the edge of the town in Zwierzyniec.

The distress of her being torn away from us at this horrible moment dismayed us and terrified Perella who had just turned twelve. Only the loving embrace of my wife, who had an exceptionally close relationship with our daughter was able to calm the frightened girl before they took her away. She remembers sending us notes complaining that she was starving and that the barrack was infested by huge rats which jumped on the beds and bit the children.

However, the swiftly approaching death-dealing events gave us no respite. On the evening of October 1st, at the end of the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, (after I had come back from work) some Lithuanian policemen accompanied by the young Desler burst into our room, fired at the ceiling and ordered us all to leave the room and go to the main gate to have our "scheins" (certificates) stamped. At Desler's request the Lithuanians permitted my brother-in-law Naum Zlatin to stay behind - Naum always used to play cards with Desler at the Industrial-Commercial club on Trotska street.

Down in the street we were pushed to the main gate by a solid chain of Jewish policemen headed by Oberhardt, supposedly to have our "scheins" validated. When I had reached the police station on the corner of Strashuna and Shavelska streets I saw through the window Zlatunia, the widow of the slain head of the first Judenrat, Saul Trotsky; Zlatunia was sitting inside with her daughter Nina and seeing her I also attempted to enter. I was blocked by the Jewish policeman Berenstein who forced me to move on towards the gate - after the liberation Berenstein was executed by the Jewish partisans for his many treacherous acts. I did not cease my attempts to break away, and when I came to the first open house entrance I jumped in there and hid in the depth of the courtyard. The prevailing darkness helped me to remain unnoticed until the Germans, having caught the designated number of victims (about 2000) had called the akztya off.

When I returned to our room I found to my great joy that in that aktzya none of my dear ones had been taken.

On that Yom Kippur of 1941 the Germans began the "liquidation" of the second ghetto. During the month of October all its inhabitants were taken by regular stages through Lukishki to Ponary and were executed.

With the liquidation of the second ghetto is connected the memory of an event which opened my eyes to the full horror of our situation.

In front of the windows of our workshop the Lithuanian police was driving down the street to the Lukishki prison a multitude of Jews from the second ghetto - men, women and children. In the passing crowd I recognized some of my acquaintances - the successful criminal lawyer Smilg, my customer Rachmiel Lam, a businessman outstanding for his intelligence and reliability, Sergey Smorgonsky, the brother of the architect with his wife, the actress Winter.

The scene of these innocent people, my fellow Jews, being driven to their death shocked me to the depth of my soul - this became even more poignant when I realized that the Polish workers in the workshop looked at this horrible injustice not with sorrow but with yells of joy and satisfaction. "Look", they were jumping for joy, "the Jews are taken to be killed".

Slapped once again by the cruel fact that we were hated not just by the Germans alone, the inescapable question: WHY? reverberated in my brain.
I could understand why the Polish landowner would preach hate of the Jews. Wanting to avoid the badly needed agrarian reform, he would assert instead that the landless Polish peasant's future lay in the taking over of the Jewish market stall.
Seeing in the Jew a competitor, the tradesmen were from time immemorial one of the main sources of persecution and hatred of the Jews. The roots of the primitive Hitlerism are based on the mentality of the German town merchants whose hate for the Jews intensified after the Jews Titz and Wertheim put the German shopkeeper out of business by creating the department stores.

But, in a country which badly needs develpement because of the population growth, why do you, Polish worker, exonerate the landowners who, possessing the vast means and even the education, do literally nothing to develop the productive forces of the country? Why do you direct your hatred against the Jews, a creative and definitely a benign component of society?

After all, all the commercial enterprises (except for some retail shops) and all the branches of industry were forged by the Jews; they gave employment and income to tens of thousands of the local population.
It was solely through the creative Jewish initiative that completely new branches of industry were established - such as the radio-receiver factory (the second largest in Poland), the canning industry, the production and tinting of furs and flax. These industries neutralized to a great extent the unfavorable consequences of the decline of the lumber and leather industries which flourished in times of the Czar.
To complete the picture one should note that at the same time the only enterprises in town whose owners were Polish - the flourmills of count Anthony Tyszkiewicz and that of Jaroszewicz and Malinowski went bankrupt; they started to flourish only after they were acquired by the Jews Driswiatski and Kinkulkin-Barantzowski.

Since I was raised in eastern Europe the exhibition of antiSemitism was no great surprise for me. But what horrified me while I watched the delighted Polish workers was the depth of their hatred for us - it united all the surrounding nationalities; even members of social classes whose political parties called for a struggle against antiSemitism thirsted for our blood.
My bewildrment was deepened by the circumstance that the recent events made doubtful the opinion that the main causes of antiSemitism were the preaching and activities of the Christian churches and the fact of Jews being different and keeping apart.
However infamous the role of the church was in inciting to persecution of the Jews, the fact was that the hatred for us reached its peak when the national socialists came to power with their cult of pagan Teutonic mythology; that the first victims of this deluge of hatred were the German Jews, their great services to their country and their assimilation notwithstanding. I realized that antiSemitism is an exceptionally complicated phenomenon whose main reason has never been established.

I remember that while lost in conjecture and looking at a Polish lad nicknamed "Dot" who, in spite of his youth was also jubilant at the sight of the

Jewish catastrophe, I suddenly had a moment of insight and decided that I had found the reason for the enigma of the widespread merciless hatred that was directed at us.

Unfortunately this explanation could only emphasize the tragic hopelessness of our situation. I thought about "Dot's" childhood. His father was probably no exception, and on Saturday would waste his week's wages on drink. Thus "Dot's" childhood was spent in poverty and hunger. But when "Dot" demanded of his father the reason why his Jewish playmate Yosi could appear in good pants on Saturday holding a piece of sweetbread in his hand while he, "Dot" was ragged and hungry, his father would probably explain: "It is because the Jew is a swindler, a cheat". It was easier for his father to accuse the Jews rather than confess his own wrongdoing to his son.

The "Dot" incident gave me the insight that the hatred toward us is based to a large extent on the human proneness to sympathize with the weakling and the failure but to envy the strong and successful.

As we know we Jews have never been supported and protected, the "pampered sons of fate". To the contrary, our plight during the last 2000 years of the diaspora has been that of a stepchild who was spared no disasters nor bloody persecutions. This demanded from us the utmost of vigilance and the maximum of effort in order to avoid complete annihilation.

This cruel destiny, the constant race against obstacles tempered our will power forcing us to be clearheaded, judicious and goal oriented.

As we had seen this bitter need developed in the Jew the character traits which were conducive to accomplishment - and, in summation this was the crime for which our neighbours refused to forgive us.

The tragedy and hopelessness of our situation was embodied in the fact that this antagonism of our neighbours which found expression in libel and persecution would only strenghen the traits of our character conducive to those accomplishments which would in their turn inflame the hatred against us.

Even our wonderfully creative work which gave birth to new branches of industry of great beneficial value for the general population found no appreciation from our neighbours - on the contrary, it only strengthened their hatred of us since is was met by yells: "Look, the Jews have grabbed our entire industry!"

I recollect that during those lightless days I would reflect that the dimensions of our misfortune would not be so huge if only "we" would often lie drunk in the gutter like "they" did.

The Polish Partisans, members of the so called "Armia Krajowa" (A.K.) "National Army" which was subordinated to the Polish Government in exile in London headed by general Sikorski acted in accordance with this mood of the surrounding population. Though organized for the underground struggle against the Germans they fought least of all against the latter - mostly the A.K. was hunting the Jews who were hiding in the forest, frequently subjecting them to torture prior to killing them. Thus, at the hands of the A.K. perished the daughter of my friend Semyon Kinkulkin. They had hacked to death with axes Mira Gonionska, the beautiful daughter of a lawyer from Lida. In another case the A.K. had bestially castrated a Jewish partisan before killing him. Since they consisted mostly of local people, the Polish partisans were excellently oriented in the localities in which they operated and thus represented a greater peril for the Jews who tried to find rescue in the dense forest than did the Germans who did not dare to penetrate deep into the forest. The exceptionally active role of the Lithuanians in the matter of our general annihilation was pointed out by me more than once.

I should introduce some heartening amendments into the sad picture of Jewish - Christian relations as far as they concerned our contact with the

Poles and the polonized Byelorussians which comprised the vast majority of the surrounding population (the Lithuanians appeared only in October of 1939, when the Russians handed over Wilno to Lithuania as their historic capital).
There was a deep hatred toward Jewry as a whole which was regarded as an omnipotent monstruosity - this hatred was expressed in the bestiality of the A.K. and in the frequent denounciations to the Gestapo.
However, if the matter did not concern Jews as a whole but a Jewish friend or neighbour, the Poles in many cases (as in the case of Poddany) manifested a humanitarian and disinterested desire to help, even though this assistance involved great risk, in many cases even risk to their lives.
I would also like to mention that in contrast to the Poles and the Lithuanians, the older generation of Byelorussian peasants, less influenced by the hateful propaganda of the Polish chauvinists, did not hate the Jews and frequently expressed sympathy for us. The fact that the Byelorussian peasants refused to charge the Jewish HKP workers for their food (as they charged everybody else) when the latter, together with the Gentile workers were sent out of town to the forest to load lumber for the heating of our workshop was characteristic of their attitude toward the Jews.

I encountered some of such exceptions i.e. Gentiles who were not infected with the burning Nazi antiSemitism even among the Germans.
Even though subjected to the hatemongering propaganda of Geobels and the "Stuermer" they were openly indignant about the horrors committed against the Jews.
One of the above was a German soldier named Berger who had been assigned to our automobile repair workshop and with whom I became friendly. A common worker from Chemnitz in Saxony, once a center of the German textile industry, Berger exclaimed while watching the Jews being driven to their deaths: "Was diese Lumpen im Nahmen des Deutschen Volkes hier herumtreiben - Jahrhunderte werden wir uns nicht reinwaschen koennen". (What this scum perpetrate here in the name of the German nation - centuries will not suffice for us to cleanse ourselves!)
The same Berger, upon returning from home-leave related an ocurrance which demonstrated that the Nazi government hid the truth from the broad masses of their population. Hearing about the horrors committed by her fellow Germans in Lithuania, Berger's wife at first decided that he must have lost his mind - his tales seemed so monstruous and improbable.

Coming back to the chronicle of events I want to stress again that, laying claim to the role of defenders of the Western Civilization, the Nazis did not want to show the world their hideous visage of murderers of millions of innocent and defenseless people and tried to carry out their plans with a minimum of clamor and publicity. In addition to their efforts to conceal the traces of their crimes, as by the burning of the bodies on Ponary and the deceitful "displays", like the famous visit of the Red Cross representatives to the concentration camp in Theresienschtadt, the Nazis also wanted to avoid resistance from their victims.
I have described previously the tactic of deceit and treachery with which the Nazis, after thinning out the total of men in the Wilno Jewish community and depriving us of our leaders, succeded in transforming us into a demoralized mass incapable of any form of resistance and in driving us into the ghetto.
Counting on the fact that "a drowning man would clutch at a straw", and wanting to avoid during the realization of their "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" any acts of desperation from people who knew that they had nothing to lose, the Germans would always leave us a ray of hope for survival.

After every succeeding bloody "Aktzya" the Germans would assure us through their mouthpiece, Yakov Gens (in whom they had found an eager executor of their plans) that we were needed by the German military machine as workers. As far as I am concerned, and I had the possibility of observing personally the activities of Yakov Gens in the ghetto of Wilno, there can be no doubt that he was performing a treacherous job according to the instructions and the plans of the Gestapo whose goal was our complete annihilation. I will also add that, even if in the evaluation of Gens's activity we take into consideration the fact that probably he had been constrained into doing his treacherous job, this mitigating circumstance is offset completely by the disgraceful methods which Gens had so shamelessly employed.

One should admit that Gens belonged to the number of people of strong character who put their brand upon the epoch in which they operate.

Having been placed as our leader by our cruel enemies during the terrible epoch when all around us was destroyed, Gens never inspired the Ghetto dwellers to heroism and acts of self-sacrifice.

To the contrary, Yakov Gens brought with him a poisoned atmosphere of moral decay - of shameless favoritism and what was even worse - of treachery in which one Jew would push another to his death to save his own hide; we find this in the disgraceful behaviour of the Jewish Police which acted on Gens's command.

Eagerly carrying out Gestapo's instructions, Gens was on one hand applying the "divide and conquer" rule, suppressing any attempt at organized resistance (the Joseph Glazman episode); on the other hand, by constantly assuring us that the ghetto would continue to exist, Gens was stretching us out the "straw" for which we, the drowning, would eagerly reach and thus silently endure another of the sequential bloodlettings.

The moral countenance of Yacov Gens can also be discerned by the fact that he surrounded himself with a plethora of mistresses of great beauty, whom he would reward with the lives of their families. I know as a fact that, upon Gens's request, during the aktzya of "yellow life certificates", the Gestapo agent Martin Weiss (who took over from Schweinberger the role of our chief executioner) wrote on the certificate of one of Gens's mistresses "valid also for the mother". This gave the woman a chance, as an exception, to take her aged mother through the gate and thus save her life for the time being.

This fact reveals not only the close cooperation between Gens and the Gestapo, but also that the latter gave Gens a significant freedom of action. The above is corroborated in all its implications by the following: during the three years of the ghetto's existance, through the endeavors of Gens none of the many "aktzyes" had ever touched the ghetto policemen or their families - including, in some instances known to me, even their grandmothers.

The difference of opinions among the survivors in the evaluation of the personality and deeds of Yakov Gens is based, I believe, on the circumstance that Gens's defenders do not take into consideration the fact that in the Gestapo we had a merciless and malignant enemy who came armed with a previously worked out, detailed plan of psychological attack which would turn us into a helpless mass.

There can be no doubt that the Gestapo realized that, in order for Gens to carry out successfully his mission of sending us to our deaths while keeping us submissive and non-resisting, it was indispensable to keep us in the dark as to his real function... It was also essential to strengthen Gens's authority and make the doomed trust him, giving him a chance to play the role of the leader who was endeavoring to save at least a small part of the ghetto population. For these reasons the Gestapo permitted Gens (as long as it did not disturb the accomplishment of their ultimate plans) to organize the life of the ghetto with the assistance of the Judenrat and even in some cases play the role of the rescuer when, upon Gens's plea the Gestapo would release imprisoned Jews. The news that Gens succeeded to grasp someone from the claws of death would spread through the ghetto with lightning speed - it naturally fell on fertile soil; after the almighty Jehovah continued to be deaf to our pleas and pitiless toward our sufferings, there was an immense need of finding a saviour in Gens.

I personally do not belong to those of the survivors who, looking back, do not see Gens as he was in reality, but rather as we all in the beginning so passionately desired him to be: a leader who was doing his best to save at least some of us. I came to the conclusion (as did many others) that Gens was a man stripped of any moral standards long before his treacherous role became obvious to most of us.

Faced with the demand of the Germans to furnish them with victims, without hesitation Gens seized the right not given to anybody - to decide who of us should stay alive and who should die and then to deliver the victims to the executioners.

In similar circumstances the head of the Warsaw ghetto, engineer Adam Czerniakow, faced with a task unthinkable to any decent person, committed suicide.

But that was not all: Gens faced us with the fact that both he and the surrounding him ruling clique (mostly Lithuanian Jews from the Kowno area), including the police and his mistresses, were exonerated from the duty of contributing their blood to our horrible sacrifices as we all had to do.

While taking away our mothers - supposedly in the name of saving the young - they shamelessly protected their own mothers.

Following in the footsteps of Stalin, Gens had created a class of those privileged (even if only temporarily so) who, to protect their personal survival, helped him by exonerating his frequently obvious treacheries; they, as did the Jewish police, actively helped Gens to successfully carry out the role of the "Troyan Horse" for which he was designated by the Gestapo.

In any event, the destiny of the Jewish community was sealed, - the forces were way too unequal.

I lingered in some detail on the description of the deeds of Yakov Gens, and will return to it more than once, since in Gens we may find the reason why the Wilno Jewish community wrote the most brilliant pages of its chronicle during its life, rather than at its death.

Even though forty years divide me from the ensuing happenings, I approach their description with the feeling of shivering horror - the earth opened under our feet and swallowed a huge part of the surviving members of the Jewish community, almost all of the members of my family among them.

Zhenia, the only daughter of my brother-in-law David Gerstein and of his wife Mera perished at the age of eighteen at the beginning of October. The Gestapo arrested her when Zhenichka bravely tried to deliver some bread handed her by a Polish woman to a Jewish manual worker at the Gestapo headquarters and to do so removed the yellow patch from her back.

As I had mentioned previously the Germans completed the liquidation of the Ghetto No 2 during the month of October, sending all of its inhabitants (numbering about 10,000), to Ponary.

Among those who perished at that time was the whole family of the "big" Kola Sheniuk, my close friend and relative who was killed earlier by the "Khapuny" - his mother, Rosa Ilinishna (born Golodetz from Shchedrin), his wife Maria Markovna (born Isserlin) and his 19 year old daughter Olga.

In the Ghetto No 1 which temporarily, (apparently taking in consideration the need for workers of the German military machine) the Gestapo was forced to retain, it undertook a series of bloody "Aktzyes" in order to reduce drastically the number of the Ghetto's inhabitants.

Following the already mentioned by me aktzyes of September 15 and October 1st 1941, (Yom Kippur) there came one most bloody in its consequences - the aktzye of the "gele sheinen" (the yellow life certificates).

Having decided to diminish the number of the Jewish families of Ghetto No 1 to about three and a half thousands, the German authorities distributed to the military establishments employing Jews, and to the Judenrat, the corresponding amount of new worker's certificates which in contrast to the old ones were printed on yellow paper.

According to a plan announced by the Germans, in the Ghetto could stay (and remain alive) only those workers who had received a yellow certificate, together with their spouses and two children under the age of sixteen. By this monstruous decree the Germans condemned to death both the families of those who did not receive the yellow certificates as well as the parents, sisters, brothers, grown up children and third children of those fortunate ones who did receive the yellow life certificates.

For the 18 Jews working in our workshop Boleslaw Poddany received only six yellow certificates. In this case Poddany did not ask for my advice, placing before me an accomplished fact: he gave the yellow certificates to me and to the pharmacist Nadelman, the former head of the next-door City Pharmacy, as well as to four young men who were able to carry out the very heavy physical labor earmarked for the Jews.

Those not accustomed to toil did not receive the certificates, my brother-in-law Mula Gerstein and my cousin's husband Kuba Rotstein among them.

Looking back, I remember that even though I was heartbroken for my relatives, at the same time I realized that if Poddany had left it up to me to decide who of our Jewish workers was to live and who was to die, he would have put before me an impossible task, completely beyond my powers to accomplish. Luckily, both Mula as well as Kuba Rotstein were able to acquire the yellow certificates elsewhere.

In connection with the "Yellow certificates" aktzye there began in the Ghetto a series of fictitious deals in which a widow with the certificate would register a stranger as her husband and vice versa. Parents with a certificate would adopt strange children. These deals were done without any compensation but there were also cases when it was done for money.

In addition to all this, there were some possibilities of buying the life certificates - some heads of the military establishments, instead of distributing the certificates among the Jews working for them, contrived to sell them in the Ghetto. My brother-in-law Mula acquired one of such certificates.

Additionally, the following members of my family received the yellow certificates: my wife's sister Rachel Cholem, her brother David Gerstein and my sister Emma Eisurowicz. Rachel and David received their certificates from the military authorities for whom they worked. My sister Emma received her yellow certificate from the Judenrat in recognition of her services to the community.

Thus in addition to those who were killed previously - my brother Yefim, my two sister's husbands Aaron Eisurowicz and Alexander Mintz and my sister-in-law's husband Yermasha Cholem, the yellow certificates aktzye condemned to death my Mother, my sister Anya with her daughtr Shela, my brother's wife

Fanya and daughter Lila as well as Emma's daughter Eva and her husband Lolek Shelubski.
My wife was to suffer the loss of her Mother with her sister, aunt Sarah as well as her sister Vera with her husband Naum Zlatin.

Describing a time in which our destiny gave us no quarter, one should recognize that it was a time which bared people's souls.
Frequently we saw people ready for self sacrifice, especially when it was to protect those they held dear.
However, there were also quite a few people who, though under normal circumstances they would have ended their days as model citizens, in these tragic days followed the elemental instinct of self preservation; to save themselves they would thrust others to their deaths - in some unique cases would even forfeit their own children.

As shown by the coming events, my sister Emma belonged to the cathegory of those people capable of the highest self-sacrifice. We have already encountered my sister Emma when she, sitting at the deathbed of her only son Gerochka had (in a peerless act of love) found the superhuman strength to suppress her infinite desperation; in order to ease her son's last days she sang for him and told him funny stories during many weeks - and kept smiling...
In these horrible days Emma remained steadfast to her own self. Even though realising that by this act she was condemning herself to death, Emma had insisted that the Judenrat should transfer her yellow life certificate to her son-in-law Leon, thus giving him the chance to save his wife - her daughter Eva.
The horror of the situation consisted of the fact that the yellow life certificate did not legalize the survival of the parents, brothers, sisters or even of the adult children of its possessors.

The terror of the coming disaster was deepened for my wife and myself by our fear for the life of our daughter Perella, who still remained in the Infectious Barracks on the outskirts of town in Zwierzyniec.
The blue life cerificates were distributed to the qualified by the German authorities family members. Immediately upon the conclusion of the distribution, the Germans, having first surrounded the ghetto with Lithuanian police, ordered all the possessors of the yellow life certificates and their families to leave the ghetto on the morning of October 24th and go to their work places.

The nightmarish events of the night of Otober 23rd, 1941 on the eve of the "aktzye of the gele sheinen (yellow life cerificates)" will never leave my heart. My pen is unable to render a picture of the happenings of that night when for the majority of the ghetto population the morning was to bring death, and the luckier part was going to lose those they held most dear.
Throughout the whole night, the surrounding darkness notwithstanding, the streets of the ghetto were overfilled with people - everybody moving and hurrying somewhere.
Among those who could find no rest on that night were my wife and I. On one hand we couldn't wait for the morning when we could hurry to the infectious barrack and hand our daughter the blue life certificate, thus saving her from the mortal danger which we knew threatened her as an inmate. Our experience taught us that in an "akzye", the Germans would first of all mercilessly kill the weak - the old and the sick.
On the other hand we were unwilling to accept the looming disaster and the whole night was spent in vain gropings for ways of saving the doomed. Before dawn, I remember we ran to my wife's sister Rachil who lived on the oppo-

site side of the ghetto to consider with her whether there could be any chance that, because of her long established friendship with Anatole Fried, the head of the Judenrat, she could use her yellow life certificate to save her mother.

Not wanting to emphasize the tragic destiny of those left behind, we parted from them without tears...

Hurrying to our daughter we were the first at the gate at dawn where the German officials, headed by Franz Murer and Martin Weiss, after checking our documents permitted us to leave the ghetto. In great trepidation we rushed to the infectious barrack where we were granted a minute of great relief when through the window we saw Perella alive, even though very skinny and, as we found later, healthy - the scarlet fever diagnosis established in the ghetto might have been wrong. The hospital administration permitted us to take Perella with us to the H.K.P. workshop where we were supposed to remain all day.

I remember that only after our arrival at the workshop did I give full rein to my feelings of despair and grief since only then, freed from fear about our daughter's safety, could I recognize the immensity of my imminent bereavement.

When the time of return to the ghetto approached, one of the workers of our workshop named Pawlin, a Pole, offered to give shelter to Perella at his home. Since Pawlin was an educated man whom we knew to have high moral standards, my wife and I gratefully accepted his offer and Perella (with the knowledge of our German overseer Berger) did not accompany us to the ghetto but went to live with Pawlin for a time.

After my wife and I returned with sinking hearts to the ghetto, we learned that from our room the Germans took to their deaths my Mother, my wife's Mother and Aunt Sara; nevertheless, when we found that, beyond my expectations, my sisters Emma and Anya with her daughter Shela, as also Vera and Naum Zlatin managed to hide and survived - I must admit that I did not cry for my Mother.

The fact that on that evening the news of the murder of my own Mother was not the worst possible disaster for me gives some slight inkling about the mental torments we were subjected to.

As I subsequently learned, Fanya, the wife of my brother Yefim and her daughter Lila, who lived in the ghetto with Fanya's family, the Shabsels, perished during the "aktzye" of October 24th.

Nevertheless, the Germans succeeded in extracting from the ghetto only a minority of the "illegals" on October the 24th. The majority managed to come through - but for how long?

On the third day after the "aktzye" we encountered the first of Jacob Gens's bloody "mistakes", resulting in the death of two thousand Jews. Gens made a speech in the yard of the Judenrat to a crowd of helpless "illegals" trembling in fear for their lives; in his speech he called upon them to resettle in the second ghetto, by that time purged of its inhabitants, where Gens assured them they could live peacefully.

However, before those who had listened to Gens - about 2000 - had even come near to the second ghetto, they were surrounded by Germans and Lithuanians and sent to be shot in Ponary. "The Gestapo has deceived me" was Gens's excuse and we believed him, since the character of his doings was not yet clear to most of us.

Fearing another "aktzye" the mass of the "illegals" began frantic attempts of fleeing the ghetto; this was facilitated by the fact that those from the ghetto who worked outside continued to go out to work.

Some, mostly women, managed to procure Christian documents and lived on the "Aryan side". But the main stream of the "illegals" was directed to neigh-

bouring Byelorussia where, apparently, they were not carrying out the policy of extermination of the Jews.
In many cases the Jews had been helped in their flight to Byelorussia by Feldfebel Anthon Schmidt, the chief of the military transport (the place of work of my sister-in-law, Rachil Cholem); for this help Schmidt later paid with his life. Since it was dangerous for Emma, Anya and Shela to stay in the ghetto, they slipped out of the ghetto hoping to stay on the aryan side with Emma's longtime servant Stefania. When it turned out that they could not stay there, I had them transferred to Zawalna 2, to the house from which our family was driven to the ghetto and where, upon my request, the caretaker Nikolai agreed to keep them in the basement and feed them.

We should take note that by that time the following occurrence forced our Gentile friends to think twice before they gave shelter to the Jews:
Shortly before the "yellow life certificate aktzye" Franz Murer came to the ghetto gate and summoned my childhood friend Victor Chelem.
Victor and his sister Eugenia, the heirs of Isaac Chelem, were owners of a wholesale glass business and sizable real estate in the commercial center on Niemiecka street and were thought to have become very rich after World War I. Murer demanded that Victor I. give up to him the gold that he had hidden outside of the ghetto. Nothing would happen to Victor if he complied, Murer said, but if he refused he would be shot immediately.
Victor could do nothing else but take Murer to his former apartment house and ask the caretaker, Nikolay Ordu to give the gold to Murer.
Murer kept his word and let Victor Chelem go - but he ordered Nikolay Ordu hanged.
The body of Nikolay Ordu was hanging in Cathedral square with a board fastened to him announcing that this was what awaited all those who hid Jewish property or who gave shelter to the Jews.

Perella heard the Pawlins talking about somebody hanging in Cieletnik. She insisted on being told about it, even though the Pawlins tried to keep it from her; Perella then decided to go back to the ghetto. She spent the night hidden in the bed of the kind former servant of Dr Luba Cholem; the servant had remained to serve the Lithuanian who took the apartment over after the Cholems were chased into the ghetto. The bed was in a cubicle partitioned out of the kitchen; fortunately, the Lithuanian never looked into the cubicle, even though Perella heard him talk in the kitchen. Next day Perella walked without incident to the H.K.P. workshop; when in the evening it was time for the Jews to go back to the ghetto, she came with me. The kind German Schirmeister Berger went with us and told the guard at the gate to let her in.
Perella remembers that she was especially eager to join us in the ghetto because she felt, incredibly, that her being with us would protect us. Strangely enough, two years later she found a "melina" (hiding place), which was indeed instrumental to our survival.

Seeing the terrible circumstances prevailing in Wilno and communicating through Nikolay, we decided that my sisters and Shela should move to Byelorussia, to a little town named Woronowo situated about 70 kilometers from Wilno. As I had related previously, my father had died in Woronowo of a heart attack on July 8th, 1926.
In our workshop I met a German soldier who, for some remuneration, delivered my sisters and Shelinka to Woronowo in an armored car.
As Nikolay told me later, my sister Emma must have had a foreboding of a sad fate awaiting them, she was sobbing bitterly as she was stepping into the car. To my great sorrow, Emma's forebodings turned out to be terrifyingly correct.

The Lithuanian police came to Woronowo and arrested all the Jewish refugees from Wilno, Emma, Anya and Shelinka among them, two weeks after their arrival. After keeping them locked in the building of the local cinema for 24 hours, the Lithuanian police shot all of them, numbering about 300 people, on November 15th, 1941.
Thus perished my sister Emma, a person of exceptional moral values and strength on the 49th year of her life. Having sacrificed herself to save the life of her daughter Eva, Emma's death was the culminating point of her life in which she knew no limits for sacrifice and for love.
Remembering the death of my sister Anya, I recall that at the time of my last meeting in 1963 with my brother David in Paris, he sobbed when we talked about Anya, (from our entire family only David and I had survived the Hitlerian cataclysm). Thus he expressed his sorrow not only about Anya's untimely and violent death but also for her troubled life.
Well read, companionable and witty, Anya was favored with intellectual abilities, a lively disposition and a lovely appearance. But she could not marry the man she loved and did not find herself fully in her role as mother.
Anya did not find happiness in her marriage to Alexander Mintz, though Sasha surrounded her with love and devotion. Sasha was not up to Anya's intellectual level and, in additon, he did not earn enough to make a proper living - thus lowering Anya's social standing. One has to take into consideration the importance of social position in our provincial city to have insight into proud Anya's sufferings when she was looked down upon by former bosom friends. Thus, having tasted the inconstancy of destiny and of human friendship, Anya was not satisfied with her lot during the last years of her life. My sister Anya was 47 years old when she perished and her daughter Shelinka (whom I had nursed while I lived with my Mother) was only 17teen.

Dissatisfied with the insufficient amount of victims of the October 24th killings, the German authorities decided on a second "aktzye". This time those who possessed the "yellow life certificates" and their families were supposed to leave the ghetto Number One on November 3rd, and for a couple of days go to stay in the ghetto Number Two which by that time had already been emptied of its inhabitants.
This time Yakow Gens was checking the "life certificates" at the gate
Looking back I would like to emphasize that, hunting with a cudgel in his hand for the "illegals" and condemning them to death, Gens in no way resembled the leader who, with pain in his heart, sacrificed a few in order to save many of the people entrusted to him - as he is described by some of our historians (Arad and others).
We were able to save, by taking her out to the second ghetto as our second daughter, a 19teen year old girl from Kowno named Yocheved Shadowska who lived in our room. To look younger Yocheved braided her hair and put on a shorter dress.

The lifeless streets of the second ghetto were horrifying - the room we entered was deathly quiet, there was an unfinished meal on the plates on a table, opened prayer books and prayer shawls spoke about a suddenly interrupted life, about people who were caught unawares when taken to their deaths.
Sorrow and the burning feelings of idignation for the murder of innocent people which I experienced then for my fellow Jews is especially deeply graven in my memory.
With us in the second ghetto was the daughter of Emma, Evochka and her husband, also my wife's sister Vera and her husband. My wife's other sister, Rachil gave her yellow life certificate to the Zlatins and during the next few

days did not return to the ghetto and stayed at her place of work with the permission of her chief, Feldfebel Anthon Schmidt,
The more lengthy and detailed search for the Jews remaining in the ghetto, mostly hidden in secret hiding places, "Melines" lasted until November 5th at which time we were allowed to return to the ghetto Number One.
The victims of the two "yellow certificates aktzyes" numbered more than 6,000, and just from October 1st, 1941 the Jewish community had lost more than 20,000 people.
Destiny knew no pity for me in that period - I lost seven members of my closest family - my Mother, both Sisters, my Mother-in-law, two Nieces and a Sister-in-law. The news of the tragic events of Woronowo threw me into a deep depression, I remember - stangely enough it was my fear for the lives of my daughter, my wife and myself that made me hold on to my strength in those days.

Looking at the influence the course of the war had on our destnies I have to note, that the dazzling German victories notwithstanding, the decisive battle that was to determine the outcome of the war continued to elude Hitler.
The "Blitzkrieg" (initiated with a delay of six weeks) which, according to Hitler's plans was supposed to have concluded the war in the space of one summer's campaign, was a failure.

This faced the German Command with the neccessity of using the Jewish work-force for some of the servicing needed by their military machine. Because of this need they had to insist on the temporary survival of the Jewish ghettos in the rear.
There can be no doubt that a decisive victory which would bring the Russian capitulation would have meant immediate extermination for us.
The need for a Jewish work-force caused by the failure of the "Blitzkrieg" is illustrated by the following:
Faced by the urgent need of supplying their army with warm clothing for the winter campaign, and with the fact that in eastern Europe the furriers and the fur manufacturers were all Jewish, the Supply Administration of the German army organized furrier workshops for the manufacture of fur garments in the Wilno ghetto.
In the beginning of October 1941, at the same time as the Jews were ordered to give up to the Germans all their fur garments, these workshops were transferred out of the ghetto to the buildings which used to house the radioreceiver factory "Elektryt".
The workers of these workshops and their families - about one thousand people - moved out of the ghetto, thus creating a separate, more privileged work camp named "Kailis". The "Kailis" workers were untouched by the "Yellow Life Certificates" aktzyes and were allowed to retain all the members of their families.
The "Kailis" workshop was initially organized and directed by a native of Vienna named Oscar Glick. He was executed when the Germans learned that he was Jewish. The Jewish self-government of "Kailis" was headed by a native of Bialystok named Pappe.

Before I continue with my description of the events in the tragedy of the ghetto of Wilno, I want to describe the destiny of the family of my son-in-law Vova Gdud, now William Zev Good.

The Gdud family consisted of the father, Dov Ber, born in the little town of Duksht, the mother Chana, born Kopelowicz, a native of Minsk, and their two sons, the seventeen-year-old Vova, and fourteen-year-old Motl. During the last years prior to the war, the Gdud family lived in Wilno, on the shore of the river Wilja, at No. 1 Kalvaryjska street, in the house built by doctor Raduszkiewicz in the style of a medieval castle.

Motl, Chana, Dov & Vova Gdud, circa 1940

Vova & Dov Gdud, circa 1945

MY SON-IN-LAW VOVA GDUD'S STORY

Attempted flight to Russia
Being shot at Ponary - miraculous survival
Warning of another execution
Running away from being shot by a Lithuanian "friend"
Father's escape from execution
Death of my mother and younger brother
Excruciating years of hiding
Kind drunkard savior
Father's generosity
Terrifyingly close to detection (death) experiences
Attempted sabotage of railroad, escape after being caught
Near encounter with deadly Polish "White Partisans"
Inability to kill a captured Lithuanian policeman

This is my son-in-law's description of the Gdud family's destiny during the dark years which followed Germany's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941. In Vova's own words, as told by him to his wife, my daughter Perella:

The worst thing that scared me about the tales of German atrocities was that they would castrate Jewish kids - here I was still a virgin!
I was seventeen.
Oh my God that was terrible, terrible, I was not going to let them, I was going to run away from the Germans. I got together with another kid, we were good cyclists - we would run away. We had a family council. My mother and father decided that they would stay but they realized the gravity of the situation and if I was young, courageous and willing to run they gave me their blessings. They made packs for us, mainly clothes and things you need going into Russia even though it was summer, they gave us money. The night was terrible, there was lots of bombing. Monday we left heading east to Minsk into Byelorussia. The Soviet troops were retreating and the Lithuanians were shooting at their Soviet comrades.
The Germans were bombing and machine-gunning the refugees - the casualties were incredible. My friend was killed by the German machine-gun fire as we were riding. The planes would go down low, the people would fall down and not move. They were just spraying - either you were hit or not. There were thousands and thousands of refugees - kids, cattle, women, all kinds of people - some of them got hit and killed, some not. I was one of those who survived and got to Minsk. But the German tactic (the Blitzkrieg) consisted of not going toward their objective directly but rather breaking through behind it. They were already east of Minsk and had all the Russian troops and the refugees surrounded and locked in - the Germans were already marching east. So that when I came to Minsk there were lots of Soviet troops but they were locked in.

There was nothing for me to do in Minsk - I couldn't go ahead so I started to go back to Wilno. On the way the peasants robbed me, took away my bike, took away my belongings - left me barefoot with just my pants. It took me more than a week to get back home to Wilno. My way back was all under German occupation - that was what had emboldened the peasants to rob me - the Poles and the Byelorussians could recognize a Jew two miles away - they would say: you see this figure far off, is this a person or a Jew? The Germans had occupied Wilno the day after I left.

A few days after my coming back home I was going to the barber's. I had to wear a "J" and walk in the gutter - these were the rules the Germans had already imposed on the Jews. I was going to the barber's on Bakshta street when I saw a German jeep driving toward me, so I accelerated and stepped into the barber shop. I took off my "J" because I thought he might have seen me. One minute later he was there shouting du! du! du! (you! you!). They took me on the jeep, then they picked up a few other young Jews and took us to the Bernardynka public park and told us that we would be taken to Molodeczno, a town in Byelorussia, to clean up the ruins of the bombardment. There were about 500 people in that park overnight. I could have walked away, we were not really guarded, we were just planted there, waiting to go to Molodeczno in the morning. Instead in the morning we were taken on trucks to Ponary, a place about 15 miles outside of Wilno, unknown at that time, now it is infamous because 100,000 people had been killed and buried there, out of which 80,000 were Jews. There are only two known survivors who got out of Ponary alive, and I am one of them.

When we came to Ponary there was a huge mass grave excavated, ready for us. There were two machine-guns standing in front of the truck.
The first thing they told us was we couldn't talk, scream or move - if there was any commotion coming out of the truck the two machine-guns would go off.
They took us one at a time from the truck to the grave, shooting each one in the back of the head. I was standing on the truck looking at it - nobody said a word, nobody moved. When my turn came I went off the truck towards the grave like everybody else and, just a few feet before the grave, I fell. At the same time, synchronous with my falling, the Lithuanian executioner shot me with his handgun. I happened to fall not as a consequence of his shooting - I just fell and he fired in the same second and he believed that he got me and that was why I fell.

There was no scratch on me, but he did not question this. The next victim they killed just about where I was fell on top of me and soaked me with his blood. They brought all the trucks, took off everybody (maybe 30 people to each truck) and killed all the people from the Bernardynka park. After everything was finished the machine guns sprayed the bodies in the grave and around the grave because not everybody was quite dead, a lot of people were still moaning. There was a lot of shooting for several minutes. I don't know what happened to me at that time, but I have no exact recollection of when the shooting stopped - I have a blank, I may have passed out.

When I opened my eyes, saw nothing, moved my head and saw nobody around, I got up and started to walk towards the gate where I came from, because the place was fenced with barbed wire. There were two guards at the gate who saw me and one of them took a shot at me, but it was a hilly terrain, so I dropped down and he did not hit me. I ran back to the grave which was next to the barbed wire. That was the most horrible moment of my life - here I was, young and healthy but terrified because I couldn't get out. It was daytime and if I would try to climb over the barbed wire the guard would probably see me from far away and shoot me. My only chance of getting out was

to dig under the barbed wire. I dug with my bare hands, scared that if I was not fast enough they would catch me. That was the most terrible, the worst moment of my life. I don't know how long it took me, but I squeezed through and ran away.
I was all bloody and in tatters from the barbed wire. On the road I stumbled into the hut of a Polish peasant I did not know and told them my story, they were kind to me. I washed up, they gave me some clothes and I went home.

None of the Jews who lived in our apartment building believed me when I told my story - they said I was crazy, I must have had a nervous break-down after having my friend killed on the way to Minsk.
My father believed my story and he said: "they are out to kill us all - we are not going to the ghetto (there was talk about that), we are not going to let them lock us up, we are getting out!" We packed up, we took some money with us and my father hid some money and Swiss watches in the attic of the house we lived in - this turned out an important factor later.

We left the city and went to live in our home in Niemenczyn, where my father's turpentine factory was. That was in July, we had two months of pleasant living before the horror caught up with us. It was summer, in our own home, in beautiful natural surroundings. The Germans did not bother us, but they planted four Lithuanians in our house. The factory was to carry on, but my father could not be in charge of it because he was a Jew, so they put in a twenty-four-year-old Lithuanian director named Stepanas (Steven) Nera. He had three young assistants with him aged about 18 - 20. He knew nothing about the operation of the factory, but he was nominally in charge. He had to depend on my father to arrange everything. He also had another problem - he spoke only Lithuanian, no Russian, Byelorussian or Polish so I was his only translator - nobody spoke Lithuanian so he could communicate only through me. They lived with us in our house for over two months and we became friendly. We were constantly wrestling. I was seventeen, Steven was 24. At that time I was very fit and strong and I would always get him down. We were lifting weights and I was always beating everybody else - it was also determination, I guess. We were doing all kinds of athletic pursuits together, we would go to the river where I had a kayak, he would go in the kayak with me. My brother played the violin, he would play all kinds of folk-music, we would dance - we were buddies. Periodically he would tell me: Vovka, all Jews are kaputt and I would say: don't talk like that, Steven and he would say: sorry, I didn't mean it.

On the night of Friday, September 20th 1941, we were asleep when suddenly the dog started barking - he was on a leash on a wire running across the property and he was furious, barking madly. My father got up, opened the window and saw the figure of a woman. He asked: who is it? She whispered - Josefowa (in Polish it means Joseph's wife) listen, she whispers, knowing that the Lithuanians are in the house - our husbands have been mobilized to dig graves for the Jews of Niemenczyn.
They will all be killed at dawn, get out of the house immediately. Did you hear me? - Yes. Did you understand? Yes, thank you!
All four of us got out of the house. My father had prepared a hiding place in the huge pile of stumps - maybe 300 - 500 yards across in the middle of the factory yard. In the midst of it there was a place where you could enter a big hiding place in which four people could sit or lay down.
There was bread, water and blankets. At first my father intended for all of us to go in there - but the workers knew about this hiding place. They had a lot of our belongings we had entrusted to them to keep for us - good clothes, fur,

leather - a lot of things. So my father said - we can't all four go in there. If anyone would get greedy and should want to inherit our stuff, if he denounces us and gets rid of all four of us in one shot - no consequences. But if he will know that two of us are still free he would be afraid that we could come and take revenge. So my father told my mother and brother to go up in there - he and I went and slept in the forest. The houses - our house and the factory were situated in a field surrounded by a huge pine forest, a big stretch of land. At dawn my father said: "Why don't you go to Gasperowicz", another worker with whom my father had made arrangements that he would shelter us if the time came and we needed it. "I'll go and look around our house and if everything is quiet I'll dig out the handguns we had hidden".

At this point several things happened to myself, my Mother and my Father.

First, what happened to me: I was going to Gasperowicz, it was about 2 km. away from us. I walked out of the huge forest, came to a field and here from the other end of the field walks out Steven, (the Lithuanian) with a rifle on his shoulder - I saw him and instinctively ran back into the forest - but he had seen me too and I felt embarassed to run away from him. He had seen me, so if I went back to the forest now, and I could, he was quite distant - that would mean that I did not trust him - but we are buddies, I couldn't do that! So I marched right out and said
"Steve, where are you going so early in the morning with a rifle?" He answered "Just hunting". I saw that he had a handgun sticking out and did not quite know what to think. He acted very normal, he asked me "Where are you going?" I said my father sent me to Gasperowicz to hire him to transport some turpentine to the city.
"Well", he says, "lets go together". So we go on with some small talk and we come to Gasperowicz. He says, "Why don't you wait a minute here and I'll go in and talk to him".
O.K. I wait and wonder - how is he going to talk to him?
Just about two minutes later he comes out with his rifle pointed at me and says "Get in!"
I say "Steve, we are friends!"
"Get in or I'll murder you right here"
I say "Steve, I can't believe it, we are friends!"
"Get in!!"
I saw he meant business so I went in and he locked me into the barn, closing a huge door and putting a bar across the door. He told the son of Gasperowicz, Vincent half in broken Russian, half in Lithuanian :
"If Vovka out, you kaput!"
Vince was my friend, about my age, a couple of years older than I. When I said "Vince, let me out!" he answered,
"You heard what he told me, if I let you out, it will come to me what was coming to you". It was pitch dark inside so I asked,
"Is there a way that I could get out through the roof?"
He said no. I asked, "How can I get out?
"Just knock down the door".
"How?"
" Just give it a good knock."
Stupidly I didn't wait and immediately gave a good knock but the door didn't budge, so I went to the opposite wall, ran and threw myself at the door, the door broke and I got out. If I had only waited five minutes, Steven would have been gone to mobilize the peasants, but he heard the first knock, so he came back and here he was standing pointing his rifle at me.

There was a furiously barking dog running on a leash between us. A neighbour was calling to me in Polish:
"Vovka, throw yourself at him, kill him!"
I looked at him and thought: I can kill him, sure I can kill him but how do I get to him - he has a rifle and a I also knew that he had a handgun. In a split second I knew I couldn't get to him, he could kill me before, so I just dodged the dog and ran (he did not come to the dog). I ran behind the barn and into the field away from the village.
I threw off my sheepskin in order to run faster and just gave a glance back and saw Steven leaning the rifle on the fence and aiming - the very same moment that I threw myself down he fired. Immediately after the shot I was back on my feet and ran, ran, ran, zigzagging - I threw myself down just as a shot was fired. The moment I swerve or fall a shot goes off and this went on for seven times. I tried to pull off my high boots to run faster but it was too time consuming - that was lucky for me because these were my boots for the next three years.
Probably seven shots were fired, I ran through and into the forest out of his sight and in the forest I was still running, until I was totally exhausted and totally breathless, then I fell and just cried and cried and cried. When I got up, I thought: now what? I remembered that there was a farm where twenty Niemenczyn Jews were working. I bet that they are going to come for them! This was about 5-7 miles away from where I was. I ran to that place - I ran, ran, ran again, saw two Poles and asked:
"Are the Jews here?"
"No, they took them all away, except for one, he is asleep on the hay".
"Where?"
"Over there". So I ran and woke him up by shaking him.
I said "Come, run, run!"
"What happened?"
I said "Come, run with me, I'll tell you later."
He got up - he did not know that they had taken all the others away and left him there asleep on the hay. Later, we found out that they came back for him later - they realized that they had missed one. He was saved by my running there. His name is Avreml Deich and he lives now in Brooklyn.
We ran away.

Now I have to go back to tell you what happened to my father. My father went to our home, he thought that everything looked quiet. When he approached the place where his weapons were hidden, he was jumped by a Lithuanian policeman who lay in wait for him with a rifle. They were one on one, my father was a very strong, athletic man, he tried to get to the policeman but there was no way. He would shout:
"Don't move!" He had his gun cocked.
"Take one step and I'll kill you!"
My father tried to bribe him:
"Listen, I have here watches, jewelry nobody had seen us, you can have it all!"
Nothing. My father offered him money, he said he would dig it up and give it to the Lithuanian - he would not budge.
Then, on the road from the factory to Niemenczyn where the Jews were held, my father tried to get physically close to him but there was no way. The guy delivered him to where the Jews of Niemenczyn were held in the synagogue. They told the Jews that they would be taken to the ghetto of Wilno, they were going to march the 20 km. to Wilno. Everybody was taking their belongings - their pillows and teakettles. My father told them:
"Fellow Jews, don't bother to pack and drag all your belongings, they are going to kill us".

Nobody believed him.

They took the 700 people and they marched them on the road to Wilno and for every three Jews there was one Lithunian shooter. For the three here there is a Lithuanian on the right side, for the next three there is a Lithuanian on the left side, for the next three on the right side again - there were lots of executioners. They were walking on the main road and about six or seven km. out of town they told them to march into the forest - there was a meadow between two huge forests. They made a right turn - it was obvious that they were not going to Wilno.

The people marched, and then, as my father told me later, the leading Lithuanian signalled with his hand and said something and all the Lithuanians aligned themselves - those on the left side of the Jews ran forward and joined those on the right side and they started to shoot into the mass of people.

The people were being hit and fell, a lot of people threw themselves on the ground instinctively, some stupidly climbed the trees, which was an idiotic thing to do, but in such a moment they did not know what they did, so they climbed trees.

My father did not loose his sanity, he did not fall or climb a tree, he just stood upright and looked at what was happening. He said he stayed upright because if he was to be hit he wanted to be killed rather than wounded. So everybody is falling, running, climbing - he is the only one standing there and nothing happens. He was clever enough not to run in the direction everybody was running, but ran towards the shooters, because if he ran towards the main road he was sure there would be guards there who would pick him out. If you run away from the shooters you are a target immediately - they see you very well, but if you run tangentially - not directly towards them but a little to the side of them, they cannot shoot at each other.

There was shooting going on, he was running, there was another guy running after him and then he hears a woman's voice calling "Mr. Gdud, wait!" He looked back and it was the pharmacist's wife, Esther Bernstein. He called to her: "Esther, run, run, run for your life, run after me!" She ran after him and they ran away into the woods. I heard all this from my father when I joined him three months later.

In 1983 when we went to Michael's and Susan's wedding in Connecticut I contacted a group of farmers, survivors from Niemenczyn. It turned out that one of them, Yankele Leifer, was the guy who along with my father carried a ninety year old woman (his grandmother, who was unable to walk on her own) to the place of execution. At the execution they put Grandma down on the ground and when Yankele saw my father take off, he followed. His Grandmother was the owner of the Niemenczyn bakery. After talking for a while Yankele Leifer inquired about my father and told me that if it were not for my father's example at the execution, he would not be alive today.

It turns out that his wife Sarah's brother and father were in the jail of Niemenczyn together with my mother and brother and were taken to the execution three days later - as will be seen below.

Now my Mother and brother were hiding in the pile of wood. Two days later my fourteen-year-old brother became very restless, he insisted that he had enough of it and got out. There was a shepherd there who saw him.

A lot of the Jews of Niemenczyn, nearly a hundred out of seven hundred, had escaped from the execution but at the end of three years only about twelve survived. They perished from hunger, exposure, illness and were killed by the Polish "White partisans", the so called A.K. - "The Territorial Army", whose primary business was the killing of Jews. They were much more deadly than the police because they were the sons of the local people who knew the terrain well - all the possible hideouts.

However, initially the police were combing the place for the hundred runaways, so a policeman was there and when he asked the shepherd "Did you see any Jews?" he answered

"Yah I saw a young one, he went into the forest there".

They grabbed my brother and took him to the police station in Niemenczyn. They caught twenty more of the runaways. They kept them all at the police station to be executed.

When my brother did not come back my mother waited till night and then went to the house of one of the workers and asked what happened to Motl. They told her that he had been caught and taken to the police station to be killed next day.

My mother went to the police station and gave herself up - she wanted to accompany my brother on his last journey.

On the next day they killed them.

I heard the execution but I did not know that it was my mother and brother. I found out about it two weeks later from the Poles. I was hiding in the neighboring forest and heard the terrible shooting at ten past one of the second day of Rosh Hashana in September of 1941.

I don't quite know how to describe the next few years - a lot of stories and a lot of hardships - these momentary terrors were nothing compared to the hardships of three years of survival in the forests in the cold and hunger. With Avreml Deich we stayed one day near where I picked him up, then we went to where his sister and brother were hiding five miles away - at night we crossed the main road and joined them. I stayed with them in a bunker (a leftover of W.W.I) for two weeks. Every night their Polish friend who was a shoemaker (they had been in the leather business), would bring us food and would tell us what was going on - that was how I found out about the execution of my mother and brother.

There was a mean forester there who would walk around the forest shooting blanks just to scare any Jews who might possibly be hiding there. One day somebody (we did not know who it was) was walking by and out of curiosity looked into the old bunker.

He looked in and we did not move, it was dark. Then he squinted and really looked and he went away - but we didn't know - had he seen us?

We couldn't take a chance - we had to split. They had some other "maybe" arrangements with somebody else, but a fourth guy was a burden, so I said OK, I'll go my own way, that was when I split out from them.

The house of the Paszkowskis, the family of Felicja Paszkowska who had come to warn us, lay halfway between the factory and the town of Niemenczyn. They also had a new uninhabited house that they had just built. I went and climbed up to the attic of the new house and stayed there. At night I would climb down, knock on their door and they would feed me - I didn't even tell them that I stayed in the attic because I was scared. From the attic window I could see everything - the police, the same Steven and his three buddies would go by the entrance while I watched. That was where I would hide out at first. Then I felt that perhaps I shouldn't call on them every night so I wandered away.

At first I was hiding out in the neighborhood of my father's territory, sitting under huge trees all day, coming out at night and calling on a peasant asking for food. They knew me and they all fed me and were kind to me. If some did not know me and asked who I was, when I answered "I am Gdud's son" - oh, then they would feed me and be nice to me but they could not keep me because anyone caught hiding a Jew was executed. So I would go back to the forest, moving from place to place.

Then, through the efforts of my father's workers, the brothers Konstanty (Kosciuk) and Vincenty (Vincuk) Liszykowski and of Mrs Paszkowski, I got a letter from my father through a woman messenger - (Genia, the stepdaughter of Konsiewicz), in which he told me to trust Genia and follow her; I did and she brought me to my father.

How was this arranged? My father had written a letter to Kosciuk Liszykowski who then told him that periodically I would reappear in another village and if my father would write a letter to me, he would have it delivered to me.

I came and found the letter saying that I should come to a certain place (the Paszkowskis) on November 1st, (or was it the 3rd?) All Saint's Day. It was dangerous for me to move - I didn't have my sheepskin and I was so cold, so cold. Once I planted myself somewhere it was hard to move. Some nights I was afraid to go out if it was very rainy and foggy - I was afraid of getting lost, so I wouldn't eat for two days - I had to hibernate.

Esther Bernstein followed my father when had ran away, she was a lost soul, totally helpless. She used to be a well-to-do lady and she never used to go into the villages, didn't know how to live in the forest. My father was a real forester. She followed him and he called on one of his workers, Stas Konsiewicz, an alcoholic. Stas used to be always broke and always ask credit from my father. My father would always smile and give him the money and always treated him kindly. So he called on this Konsiewicz (K). K was a poor peasant, he was 37 years old. Maria, his wife was 50. He was her third husband. Maria had a daughter Genia from her first husband, and Genia had an illegitimate child - Oles, a boy just a few months old. Maria cared about the household - feeding the animals and the family. The young girl cared about herself and the child. Stas K, the third husband cared about nothing - all he needed was his booze. One day Stas comes to my father and says: there is a young Jewess here, eating breakfast with us, she ran away from the execution and she is lost. What is her name? Libka Rudaszevski. Her brother used to be my father's employee. My father said: listen, K, you know that if they catch you hiding two Jews or three Jews the verdict for you is the same. I'll have to feed her - don't worry, I'll feed her. So, he was hiding three Jews - he doesn't care about anything but his booze, so my father has to give him money for the booze, but my father had a terrible problem. When K gets drunk he beats the shit out of his wife and her daughter, he destroys the house, he breaks the windows, the door. The daughter comes with a black eye, all beaten up screaming bloody murder at my father:

"Don't give him money, look what he did to us! If you give him money for booze I'm going to call the police and you will all be killed!"

On the other hand money is one of K's motivations so he can drink, he also likes to play cards and he invariably loses. My father tells him:

"Listen Stas, you play cards, don't drink".

"Gdud, I want just a pint, just one pint".

"OK, one pint but no more."

Pretty soon he is done with the pint and wants more.

"Eh Stas" - he would kiss my father and hug him and beg him for just one more.

And the women would say "Don't give him money!"

My father managed somehow to float between all these problems with his Talmudic approaches.

There were other perils in our fugitive life. We spent one summer on a self-created hummock in a wooded marsh. Throughout the nights we carried bags of dirt from the neighboring fields to elevate a flat, less soggy piece of ground. We felt more protected there since few people would want to look around that place - they would have to slosh through knee-deep muddy water.

However, soon enough we found out that besides the two Gduds there were other dangerous creatures crawling around. These were vipers whose bites were fatal since we could not seek medical help - once you were bitten you were pretty much doomed. In the silent nights their rustling movements were audible and would alert us to their presence.

During the daytime however, with the presence of adventitious environmental sounds their movements were hardly audible and the vipers could only be detected visually.

One day, as I was sitting practicing drawing and sighting with my gun, my father screamed out: VIPER!!

Indeed, one was just two feet away from my thigh. I jumped, very shaken and my father went after the venomous snake, killing it with the heel of his boot.

For many years after the war I still remained phobic to the sight of any snake. It was only in about 1970 when Pearl could remark:

"I guess you are cured of the fear of snakes" when I ran to grab a camera to take a picture of a King snake rather than a BB gun that I used to shoot them with.

Although I had never fired live ammunition during the war since I only possessed nine bullets for my Nagan (powerful Russian revolver), through practice I became very proficient in the handling of my gun. I would sit in the swamp, put the gun in various places and grab it with great speed with either the right or left hand, sighting it on a target.

Even years later when I wanted to impress Pearl (then my girl-friend) in the amusement park in Italy with my marksmanship, I would hit the center of the target with my first shot - this would snap our photograph. We still have these souvenir pictures in our album.

Living would get harder in the cold months. The elements were severe for anybody, but especially for those like us who were poorly dressed, poorly nourished and scared.

One winter was particularly bad.

My father was very ill. He had fever, chills and a painful swelling in his neck. We had been alerted that the police were snooping in the neighboring villages, perhaps for moonshine, but finding an incidental Jew was always a bonus. We had to get out from the Konsiewicz house, get on the main road and from there make our way into the frozen marsh. We couldn't go directly because our footprints in the snow would give us away.

We dug a depression in the snow and lay in it covered with a light colored blanket. My father was delirious - I feared that I would lose him then. I was thinking that if only I knew what to do for him, I could save him. I realized then how vital the skill of a physician is. I thought then that, if I survive the Nazis, this will be the skill that I will want to learn. It is the most important job one can do. I'll become a doctor. Later my father's neck-gland abscess drained and he recovered.

It has been frequently said that surviving the Holocaust was a matter of sheer luck - this is true to a large extent. However, I feel that if it were not for my father's wisdom, his guidance and protection, I wouldn't have survived the Second World War. I was fed up, angry and rebellious. This attitude had in fact cost my brother his life. The description of some of the episodes which took place during those years will emphasize the truth of these feelings.

We were getting low on money. As you may remember, my father had buried a box with money, gold coins and Swiss watches in the attic of the last apartment we had lived in in Wilno. He made a mnemonic map of the location of the box (with exact dimensions of distances from the marking points - the attic was huge, encompassing numerous apartments). Each of our family members was drilled about remembering the location of this box.
At this point of the Nazi occupation, however, there was no way for a Jew to reach that place - we were not even in Wilno. Later on, when I had to escape from Wilno, I had to swim accross the river during the night.

My father assessed the situation and decided that he could trust and confide in Maria Konsiewicz. There was risk for us in the sharing of this information with her: the local peasantry was poor and greedy, the life of a Jew was totally worthless. At one point, when salt was scarce, the Germans would reward a peasant with two Kg. of salt for a Jew, dead or alive.
Thus, if Maria wanted to inherit the valuable box she could easily denounce us to the police, keep the money and get praise from the Nazis.
My father felt that her moral fiber was such that she could be trusted. She was explained thoroughly where the box was, made a trip to the city, sneaked up to the attic and followed my father's exact instructions. She was late to return and we had a very anxious and fearful day. My father was reciting Tehilim (psalms) all day long. Maria arrived with a triumphant, smiling face and handed over the wrapped box to my father without ever unwrapping it.
I vividly remember her face with her light bluish eyes, reddish wind-tanned facial skin, dark brown hair interspersed with some grey and a half-smiling, cheerful face. She always liked to joke - so did my father and there was a warm feeling between them. My father adored Maria's infant grandson Oles (Genia's son) and would play with him for hours.
I've often wondered whether Lenny's fascination with infants was inherited diagenically, skipping one generation (myself).

Stas used to tease his wife: " You have buried two husbands, but I'll bury you" (becuse he was younger). And she would smile and say: "Well this is still to be seen". What happened one winter was that K got drunk and on his way home he fell into a well. He was screaming bloody murder, the neighbors fished him out and brought him home. It was before the antibiotics, he got pneumonia and died. Before he died he was delirious, he had high fever and all the time he was saying:
"Manka (his wife), protect my Jews, take care of my Jews, don't let my Jews down." And you know, I had such a soft spot for alcoholics, it stayed with me for years.

Once the police came to the Konsiewicz house - this was another very scary moment in my life. The arrangement we had with K during the winter was that we were hiding in the spare room of his house where they kept all kind of supplies - grain, feed. In that room there was another little separation where we stayed. There my father made a double wall, so that in case of danger we would sneak into that double wall. We had a code: if the dog barked we got out of the little room into the first room. If it was any official or the police, whoever was home would knock three times - that meant police, get in behind the double wall. One day the dog was barking and my father said:
"Three knocks, police, get in!"

"I say no, no, it was only two knocks" - he gave me a good kick saying get in, idiot! So Libka, the young girl got in, Esther Bernstein got in, I got in.
There was a coat masking the entrance - a temporary thing, the entrance was not visible but if somebody would touch the wall he would know that it was a fake one. I hear words in Lithuanian:
"And what is here?" Genia, the daughter, did not know whether we managed to sneak in and remained silent, then she said:
"Well, supplies".
"And what is behind this door?"
Then he comes in, it is pitch dark so he lights a cigarette lighter.
My heart was pounding because we did not have weapons at that time (that was 1942, we got weapons later) so if he had caught us we would be dead ducks. It was so close that I heard him breath and thought he could hear the pounding of my heart. I was also scared that Libka, who was a very stupid kid, as a matter of fact she was my classmate and in school we called her Libke the calf, very dumb kid, might say Oy! or something like that. I grabbed her hand signalling: Keep quiet! Keep quiet!
Finally he just walked away. What was the problem?
K's brother was a thief - he was stealing chickens from the neighbors. Finally the neighbors got tired and denounced him to the police for stealing their chickens. When the police didn't find the chickens at his house the neighbors said :
"Yah, he takes them to his brother, the other thief and they feast on them together."
So the police came to look for chickens - they looked all over, even looked in the stove to see if there was any cooking going on and they missed four Jews!

Our trips from Konsiewicz to Paszkowski would take us through a village where a forester, a known Jew hunter, would play cards sipping moonshine with his buddies. They were armed. My father and I would take great pains and walk through a swampy field away from the main road to avoid passing through that village.
After we obtained our guns through Paszkowski, I quarrelled with my father and refused to take the precaution of skirting the village. I marched through the center of the village and kicked off the barking village dogs. I had my finger on the cocked trigger of my gun and was ready to shoot it out. Fortunately only the dogs showed up.
All the wanderings from one location to another were always made in the full dark of the night. I knew the terrain, the forests and the fields with great precision. On a dark, cloudy, rainy night when you are in a dense pine forest you walk as if blindfolded. The only way you manage not to get lost, and come out on the other side of the forest, is if you walk with one foot in the wheel-track of the dirt road.
If you run into anybody you don't ask questions, you shoot first unless you can jump off to the side behind a tree. One time I went from where we stayed to the Paszkowskis and could not return before daylight. My Father was very anxious about my fate. Next night while I was walking back he decided to go to look for me. We always used exactly the same route. We met in the dark but an instinct kept us from shooting each other. After we passed each other without killing one another my father turned around and called my name.

Another experience in hiding, less scary but excruciating, happened to us when, in our periodic foreys, we came to stay the day with a friendly worker named Ilewicz. When the dogs started to bark while Ilewicz was out, we climbed into a niche behind the chimney on top of the oven - this is a very warm, comfortable place used for sleeping but never while the front of the oven is used for cooking. We were hiding there when a young man came to flirt with Genia, the sixteen-year-old orphan niece of Ilewicz. The man was a stranger, we could not trust him - we could lose our lives and betray the Ilewicz, they would be executed for harboring Jews - so we were stuck.

While the adults were out the young man tried to make out with Genia and stayed on and on - we were stuck there for hours. I had to urinate badly and in desperation took off my boot and filled it up. Little did I know, when I was running away from Steven and attempted to take off my boots to run faster, how many uses this boot would have for me. And now, following this immense relief and ecstasy came the agony. You see, Genia had to prepare dinner for the family and was going to bake "bliny", (a kind of huge Byelorussian pancake) so she had to put on the fire in the oven. The heat created was unbearable - we sweated so much that we dried out to such a point of dehydration and exhaustion that we were moribund by the time we could come down.

One day when we came to Paszkowski he said: "Listen, I don't want to know where you are hiding, but if you happen to stay with Konsiewicz, get out immediately, the word is that he is hiding Jews".
My father did not acknowledge that we were staying with K, but asked what made people suspect?
"Listen, he is a poor peasant but somehow he always has money now to drink and to play cards. He never wins, always loses and he always comes up with more money - the word is that he must be hiding Jews, it won't be long before the police will come there."
When we got this warning that our place was possibly betrayed, we got out. The first thing my father did was to find a place for the two women. He went to another of his workers and asked him to shelter them, my father would pay him for hiding them as well as for their food. My father would support the two ladies during the next three years.

The two of us ended up with a peasant family of three - two young parents and a baby whose names escape me after so many years, but I think that the man's first name was Josef. They were scared, but after my father had carefully shown them the potential for an undiscoverable hiding place, they agreed to hide us.
With Josef's help my father constructed a double wall in the room where we slept. The space between the walls could be reached only from the cellar through a trap door which could be lifted up for entry and then weighted down by one of us standing on top of it.

One day in 1947 a tall man comes to Hadera from Haifa and is looking for Dov Gdud. My father says, "I am Dov Gdud." The man says "Dov Gdud, I want to shake your hand, I came from Haifa to shake your hand." So my father says: "Fine, lets shake hands". The man says:
"O.K. now I can go back to Haifa." My father asks: "Who are you, why did you want to shake my hand?" "I wanted to shake the hand of the man who saved the life of my wife."
"Who is your wife?"
"Libke Rudaszewski."
We visited them since, Libke the calf has two wonderful sons in the Israeli army.

There is another act of generosity of my father's which was very important for me, the impression it made influenced my behavior throughout my life.
In 1943 we got a letter from my father's very good friend Moishe Beckenstein who wrote to us in Yiddish that his money had run out.

Their family of four plus another were sheltered by a Polish family but he was out of money and he asked my father for a loan because without it they would not be sheltered any more. My father knew his handwriting, it was authentic and my father told me that he was going to split his money with Moishe. I got furious.
"What do you mean, we are going to split our money with Beckenstein? Listen, we are two years into the German occupation, who knows how long it will go on! What about us, what about me? You are also paying for Esther and Libka. Who knows how long this war will go on?"
My father looked at me and said: "My son, do you know whether a month from now, a week from now or even a day from now you or I will be alive - do you have any assurance that we will need that money - ever? We have no right to gamble on the presumption of our survival and keep the money for ourselves - we may be dead tomorrow. This money can buy five lives today". I was very angry with him, I did not want him to do it, but he did it.

That was a lesson I never forgot. It had an incredible impact on my life in many, many ways. The fact was that we survived, the two women survived and the five people of the Beckenstein family survived, they are all in Israel - the parents have died since.

During the summers we hid in the vast wooded swamps bordered by two highways near the town of Bezdany. Some runaway Russian prisoners of war stayed in the swamp too and I got friendly with them. We decided to sabotage the railroad (used by the German military) in Bezdany.
When we got there everything seemed quiet but then suddenly we were in the glare of spotlights and we were captured. The Germans did not know that I was a Jew, but the Lithuanian police spotted me immediately. We were taken to the Lukiszki prison in Wilno. While there I managed to send a note through some Jews who worked there to Kamenmacher, the father of a very dear friend of mine. Kamenmacher was a very influential man in the ghetto. His advice to me was that my only chance was to answer the call for any craftsmen that the Germans might need - no matter what trade.
Indeed about thirty of these craftsmen were released from Lukiszki and we were marching toward the ghetto when I slipped away from the group, ran into a courtyard and hid in the outhouse hole. I climbed out when it was dark and had to maneuver through the streets of Wilno in spite of the curfew, listening for steps or voices of the patrol and evading them as best I could. I was trying to reach my father in the Bezdany area which lay on the other side of the Wilja river; the bridge was guarded, so I swam across this rather wide and rapid river. I got to my father unharmed, but never saw these Russians again.

In the late spring and early summer of 1944 the German armies were retreating. We were just east of Wilno and my father was worried that major battles for the city could take place near us. To protect ourselves against just such an eventuality we built a "bunker" at the edge of the forest. Inside we stocked it with loaves of bread and water. The roof of the bunker was flat on the ground, camouflaged with greenery and a young pine tree was inserted on top of a removable trap door. A metal pipe served as air access. A saw was stored inside the bunker to be used to procure a fresh pine tree when needed. Indeed, in early July of 1944 we had to use that shelter. We were sitting there when one night my father remarked:
"If it lasts much longer Esther and Libke will die of hunger while we have all this bread here". I said: "I can deliver it to them!"
My father was unwilling to risk my going, but I assured him that I could run there in no time - it was only about 5 Km. I was determined to do it and I was also

anxious to get out. On my way, as I came to the edge of a field interposed between two forests, I stood still, looking and listening before getting out onto the field. It was a clear night; I heard a whinny of a horse and a few minutes later four or five horsemen emerged from the forest across the field from me. These were the deadly Polish "White partisans", the A.K. I delivered the bread and was very happy to be back with my father.

A few days later the fighting quieted down and it seemed that the Germans were out. We were sitting in the attic of Josef's house when one morning I decided that the time has come when I could walk in broad daylight from Josef's house to that of a friendly peasant named Bula. We always used to only visit him at night. My father begged me to refrain for a few more days, it was such a tumultous time and one could get killed so easily. I felt that I had waited long enough to fulfill my desire to be able to move about in broad daylight.
I came off the attic and headed toward the road. It was only a few kilometers. As I was walking on the road in a vast, long field I suddenly saw a group of men heading towards me. As the distance diminished I realized that they were armed and carried rifles. My heart sank in: they were civilians and thus almost certainly the deadly "White Polish Partisans". I had to decide quickly on a course of action. If I turned back they would shoot me. If I went on my powerful "Nagan" revolver had only seven bullets to shoot before I had to reload it. I did not think that my chances were good in a shoot-out. I decided to speed up walking toward them and get to a bridge over a small stream before they got there. I went off the road just before the bridge and ran alongside the shrubbery on the shore of the stream - I disappeared before I could be found by them.
Later my father told me that these were the hardest moments of all the three years for him. He was watching the entire event from the attic of Josef's house and was totally impotent to avert the looming disaster.

The frontline finally moved westward, the Germans retreated and my father and I crawled out to greet the first Soviet tank. We must have seemed very odd to the Red soldiers since they asked repeatedly who in the world we were. Our hair and beards unkempt, our clothes dirty and ragged, we didn't look like anybody they had encountered before. When we tried to embrace them, telling them that we were Jews just liberated by them from the Nazis, they started to jeer:
"We know your kind, your people are now moving from Novosibirsk to Tomsk" (cities deep in the heart of Siberia, away from danger.)
"No, remarked another one, by now they are moving their furniture to liberated Leningrad!"
We felt thunderstruck and scared - this was a lawless time, they could have knocked us off without ever having to account for it. The young lieutenant in charge of the tank interposed: "That is enough, boys". They gave us soup and fed us, asked some questions and let us go. We felt terribly let down.

We stayed out of sight for a few days and then the liberating Soviet armies took the city of Wilno. We were back under Soviet rule. Despite our experience with the tank soldiers there was euphoria in our hearts and celebration all around us, but we returned to a Niemenczyn devoid of all our family and friends. The war was going on. The Russians were appealing for army volunteers and in spite of my father's protests I went to the mobilization point in the town hall and enlisted. I wanted to kill Nazis. I felt terribly guilty for not having killed them when I had a chance to do so. There was a crowd of young people there, we were directed to march to Wilno, pass a screening exam and then we would be sent out to fight. We were marching the 18-20 kilometer stretch from Niemenczyn to Wilno. My father walked with me nagging me about my stupidity:

"You survived the three horrible years, you are the only surviving member of my entire family. The war is nearing to an end and now you want to lose your life?"

I did not want to hear that. When we came to Antokol, (the eastern suburb of Wilno) my father asked me:

" Won't you stop and visit our friend, Mr Krukowski?" (a Pole who was our contact and part of our support through the three years of Nazi occupation.)

Indeed we stopped and my father embraced his pre-war customer and friend whom I, personally, was meeting for the first time. After we visited and my father told Krukowski where I was heading, Krukowski exclaimed in disbelief:

"You want to go to the battlefield? Look at yourself in the mirror - you don't even have the strength to carry a rifle now. Why don't you put some meat on your bones first. Recover and rest up for a couple of weeks!"

I replied: "In a few weeks the war may be over, the time to go is now!"

Neither my father's nor Krukowski's speeches were convincing. However, that night something powerfully convincing happened. The German Luftwaffe (the Air Force) bombed the newly liberated city, causing incredible damage. We were in the cellar of the Krukowski family with bombs exploding all around. I was terrified and my fear did not escape my father's eye. He probably was frightened too, but I did not notice it.

"You think that this is bad? This is just a child's play compared to what you will get at the front!" In the morning I acceded to my father's pleas without great difficulty...

There is another story. We never hid our experiences from our children even when they were very young. Some of our friends did not talk about it until their children were much older, but we were so imbued with our memories that we always shared them with our family. When they were little the kids were always after me: "How many Germans did you kill?" They knew that I had weapons after a while. I never answered, I used delaying tactics by saying "I'll tell you when you get bigger". Out of the three kids it was Anne who said when she was about fourteen:

"Dad, I'm big now, you said that when I'll be big you will tell me so tell me, how many Germans did you kill?" "OK Anne, I'll tell you the story".

One day in 1943 I was walking around with an escaped Russian prisoner, a young kid (so was I). I had a handgun. We walked into a peasant's barn, I knew the place. After a while of living in that area I knew the voices of dogs about five km. around. A dog would bark in one place, I would identify where it was; half an hour later another dog would bark which I knew was closer and I would know that somebody was walking this way - the topography was so familiar to me that I could do this. I would always walk at night, in the darkest of the nights I could find places in the forest and anywhere in the villages. In this place we would come to the barn, sneak in in the morning to sleep - we took shelter there. One day we fell asleep and then the dogs were barking. I looked through the cracks in between the logs of the barn wall and saw that there were five people in a horse carriage, three civilians and two policemen. The Russian guy said "Hey, we split!" but I said that this was no good, because there was a big field behind the barn and we would be exposed, they had rifles, they could pick us off.

Let us see what happens. They walked into the stable and he wanted to run but I said we can't make it, lets just watch. They came out, walked back to

the carriage, talked among themselves and then the policemen headed toward our barn - now what do we do? I had a handgun. I say OK, there are two halves to the barn door, so that as they enter we can hide on both sides - you on the left and I on the right. You keep quiet, just have your hand in your pocket, push it out pretending that you have a gun and I will do the rest. The two Lithuanian policemen with rifles on their shoulders and handguns in their belts open the barn door and they march in - I jump out and scream in Lithuanian
"RANKOS AUKSTIN" - "Hands up!" One of them goes for his gun, I yell
"Drop, freeze!"
He sees me with the Nagan (that is an equivalent of a 38 but with a long barrel so that the bullets are carried quite far) and he sees the other guy and he stands. Then I commanded them one thing at a time: "You on the right open your belt! Let it drop. Take three steps forward. Stop! You on the left move, open your belt. Drop the gun. Take three steps forward. Stop!" When they carried it out we came and collected the handguns - now I had two handguns and the Russian had one. Then I commanded them to drop the rifles, we collected the rifles and now I say: You march. We walk out, they are marching in front of us, we have two rifles and three handguns and the other three are civilans. We were heading toward the swamps with the two policemen from Niemenczyn. The Russian tells me:
"I'll take care of this one, you take care of that one."
"No, I say I'll take care of both of them, one for my mother, one for my brother."
We are marching into the swamps, remote from the civilians; the Lithuanians start to implore and I scream:
"You bloody murderers, you killed my mother, you killed my brother!"
They cried:
"We swear we had nothing to do with that, we were not even there, we had nothing to do with that!" They fell to their knees and begged and I just couldn't kill them. I told them - run! vanish! I always felt ashamed about not having killed them, but when I told it to Anne, she said: " Dad, I'm so glad you've never killed anybody"...

Looking back at the Niemenczyn massacre, as related by an eyewitness, my son-in-law, it appears that the Lithuanians, (strangers in these parts whose local population consisted of Byelorussians and Jews) perpetrated the murder of the Niemenczyn Jews on their own - the Germans did not have to take part in the massacre.
It is not known to me whether the Lithuanians committed their criminal deeds in Niemenczyn upon the command of Germans, but in many cases known to me they killed innocent and peaceful Jews with bestial cruelty on their own initiative. The infamous Lithuanian "Ipatinga" which carried out all the executions in Ponary consisted entirely from volunteers. My son-in-law and his father survived with the active help of the Byelorussian peasants. They were imperiled by the Polish partisans, members of the "A.K.", who were no less eager to exterminate the Jews than were the German Nazis and the Lithuanians.

LIFE AND DEATH OF THE GHETTO

Relative stabilization of the ghetto in 1942
The will to live
Smuggling in of food at the risk of death
Sanitation arrangements
Strashun library, theater
Perella's memories of life in the ghetto
Aktzye against the elderly
World events in the Pacific, Africa
U.S. saves Russia with provisions
Oshmiany aktzye - shame of the Jewish ghetto police
Betrayal by Gens
Gens collaboration in the suppression of the resistance F.P.O.
Glazman's expulsion from the ghetto
Wittenberg, communist head of the F.P.O., delivered to the Gestapo
Liquidation of the work-camps
News from the western front
American landing in Africa
Allied landing in Sicily
Italy arranges armistice after arrest of Mussolini
Germany takes over
Beginning of the liquidation of the ghetto of Wilno, Aug, Sept 1943
Four-day Estonian aktzye
We are taken into their maline by the Shapiro family
My wife saves me at the last moment from being taken
Judgement of history on traitors

The murder of the innocent inmates of the Wilno ghetto did not halt after the "aktzyes" of the yellow life permits.
There were two more bloody "aktzyes" before the end of 1941.
The first, during which about 500 people perished, was directed against the family members of the Jewish manual workers of the Gestapo, who during the previous "aktzyes" had been permitted to retain their brothers, sisters and parents.
The second, the so-called "aktzye" of the pink certificates (of which about 400 people fell victim) was directed against the "illegal" inhabitants of the ghetto and took place before Christmas of 1941.
The family members of those possessing the yellow life permits did not have to leave the ghetto this time, they were given pink certificates instead.

In spite of continuous killings aimed at reducing to 12,000 the number of the inhabitants of the ghetto, the Germans were unable to accomplish their bloody plan in its entirety. At the beginning of 1942, when we began a period of temporary stabilization, the population of the ghetto (including the "illegals" - people who, by hiding in "melinas" and leaving the ghetto for a time were able to avoid the carnage intended for them) numbered about 20,000.

As we have seen, through the use of treacherous and merciless tactics, in the course of six months the Germans and Lithuanians, (with the help of Jewish traitors) were able to exterminate the vast majority of the physically and psychologically disarmed Jews of Wilno without encountering any open resistance.

Even those who avoided the Ponary bullets were condemned to a slow but sure death by the inhuman conditions designed for them by the Germans.

Even though our housing conditions were somewhat better since after the bloody "aktzyes" the number of the inhabitants of our room was very much reduced, we still, as before, had to sleep on the floor and were forced to contend with hunger, lice and cold.

The food rations determined for us by the Germans (half of the rations given the Gentiles) were completely inadequate for people who had to do heavy labor 12 houra a-day, six days a-week, but even those we had to share with the "illegals".

I want to emphasize that in the fight for survival, under these extremely difficult conditions, both the Jewish self-government as well as the inhabitants of the ghetto showed exceptional inventiveness, perseverance and courage.

Our will for survival, tempered by thousands of years of persecution, manifested itself fully in the ghetto.

A broad medical service was organized even while everything was collapsing and the population was hemorrhaging under the blows of the ceaseless "aktzyes". Measures were taken to forestall the epidemics which threatened the inhabitants of the ghetto because of the unsanitary conditions engendered by the unspeakable crowding. All the departments of the Jewish Hospital headed by Doctor Ilya Grigorevich Sedlis were functioning normally from the moment we were put into the ghetto. At the Hospital, clinics offering the services of all the specialists were opened. Two bath houses were hurriedly built in which all the ghetto inmates had to wash regularly - or be deprived of their food rations.

In the bath houses the clothing and underwear of the bathers were simultaneously subjected to scrupulous disinfection.

The Nazis did not achieve our deaths through starvation and exhaustion - as they did in the concentration camps and with the Soviet prisoners of war.

The Jews working in the German institutions outside of the ghetto were able to purchase some food-stuff by bartering their clothes and underwear, or by paying cash for their purchases. Gentile traders were waiting for us at our places of work foreseeing that they could charge us high prices. Returning from work to the ghetto we would contrive (at the risk of our lives) to smuggle the food in - some for their families, others to sell.

This trickle of food into the ghetto was fiercely prohibited by the Germans since apparently it counteracted their plans of starving to death the non-working population of the ghetto. On order and under observation of the Germans - frequently checked by Franz Murer himself, the Jewish police would scrupulously search the returning workers and cruelly beat those trying to smuggle in food.

In some cases Murer, who was particularly zealous in the fight against the prohibited bringing in of food to the ghetto, would send the offenders to the Gestapo, from where they never returned; such was the fate of the singer Luba Levitska, the brother-in-law of Bundist Kagan - Vergili, Stupel and others.

The news that Murer was at the gate as we were returning, was for us very bad news indeed.

Our group was twice searched by Murer personally as we were marching down Zawalna street on the way to the ghetto. I managed to let fall into the snow the food carried by me before Murer, pushing his finger into my chest, asked: "Und Sie?" (and you?)

Nevertheless, the trickle of food brought in by thousands of those working outside of the ghetto was not the only way the food got in. By bribing the Lithuanian guards, the Judenrat succeeded in systematically bringing in food by the cartload. Moreover, a whole new class of traders evolved in the ghetto; most successful of these were those chimney sweeps who worked in the city. My young former employee, Aaron Kagan and his brother Jasha, were ones of these chimney sweep enterpreneurs. They provided the ghetto with all the neccessities, by carrying them over the roofs and through incompletely blocked openings between attics.

Accordingly, everything could be bought in the ghetto; the question of adequate nutrition was dependant on ones possession of money. The Soviet currency - 10 rubles to one German mark, continued to circulate in the occupied lands.

The department of Social Help of the Judenrat, headed by my friend, attorney Srolowicz, cared about food for the needy. The Judenrat income consisted of taxes, rent, special fees and contributions (I gave them more than once). Additionally, motivated by the urgent need for money to feed the needy and bribe the representatives of the authorities, the Jewish criminal police would search private dwellings and confiscate the discovered gold and jewels. Thus, to the best of my knowledge, we had no deaths from starvation during all the time the Wilno ghetto existed - in contrast to the Warsaw ghetto in whose streets one could everyday find bodies of people dead from starvation.

Though we had access to our valuables through Poddany with whom I was in daily contact and had no money problems, our diet was extremely modest. For instance, I bought sugar for my wife and daughter only, personally I used the cheaper saccharin. I don't remember ever having indulged my daughter with a white breadroll in the ghetto, even though it was easily available - for a price.

My wife shared one of my personality traits, namely we did not live just for today, we thought about tomorrow. This made us able to avoid deprivation during the three years of Nazi occupation and to aid our relatives - mine as well as my wife's.

In the ghetto I had to support my niece Eva and her husband Lolek who were penniless. I gave them 100 rubles every day. Subsequently, in the H.K.P. camp we were joined by the family of my brother-in-law Samuel Gerstein (Mula) to whom, during ten months, (in addition to the large sums he needed at particular times), I gave daily 200 rubles.

I should add that used clothing, linen and underwear, worthless in the United States, were in great demand at that time, because in the absence of any production there was a dearth of merchandise. My tuxedo and the black fox fur-piece which I had brought for my wife from Paris were the first of the things we sold. Thereafter followed my wife's asthrakan fur-lined winter coat, made by Mrs. Miller, the best dress-maker in town, for which I got 220 golden rubles; I also sold my winter coat, lined with dyed sheepskin - the fur which was manufactured by the Wilno factory "Furs".

The difficulties of heating and cooking were very acute during the first winter spent by us in the ghetto, which was very severe. We had electricity, but the use of any electrical appliances was grimly forbidden. This question lost some of its acutenes during our second winter, when the ghetto began to be supplied with lumber from a forest near the village of Sorok Tatar; the Jews from the Wilno ghetto cut the forest down under the direction of my wife's brother, David Gerstein.

We continued to live in the apartment house of engineer Lazinski on Straszuna street No.1. Though that house had been selected as the living space for

the manual workers of the Gestapo, we were able to continue living there, since Naum Zlatin, my brother-in-law who shared our room, had been appointed house superintendant by the Judenrat.
Since the bloody aktzyes had reduced the number of inhabitants of our room to seven, my wife and I were able to put a door on top of two trestles and cover it with a comforter, thus graduating from sleeping on the floor up to a "nara". For Perella we managed to get an iron folding bed without a mattress on which she slept covering the iron rail with a pillow.

Since the acute terror had abated temporarily, we had time to become fully aware of our miseries. Our nerves were still stretched to the breaking point. Perella is embarassed to remember that she, (a twelve and then thirteen-year-old at that time), hated an unkind inhabitant of our room more than she did the Nazis.
With the spring of 1942 my wife started to go out with our group for work in the H.K.P. at 23 Wilenska street. She worked till noon as the cleaner of the office of Boleslaw Poddany and returned alone to the ghetto with a special permit.

A relatively quiet time for the Wilno ghetto began with the beginning of 1942. Our executioners were forced to slow the tempo of our extermination. They needed a workforce, since the war was taking longer than they expected, there were unforseen failures at the front.
This quiet time would end when, by instituting forced labor for the Gentile population of the lands occupied by the Germans in the east and in the west, Gauleiter Fritz Zaukel succeeded in assuring the supply of workers needed for the servicing of the German war machine.
This short interruption in the realization of the Nazi plans for the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" was taken advantage of by the Judenrat to organize the life in the ghetto.
There were the previously mentioned measures of hygiene, the provision of the inhabitants of the ghetto with medical help and food, the feeding of the needy. In addition I should first of all mention the care for the ghetto children, the vast majority of them orphans. The children received a supplementary food ration. Together with the creation of shelters and orphanages directed with immense self-abnegation by Dr. Szabad-Gawronska, schools were also opened with Yiddish as the teaching language. There was also a school of music and piano playing headed by Tamara Abramowna Gerszowicz.
The books of the Matias Straszun library were greatly treasured and utilized at that time. Chaykel Lunski, the librarian, was spared by the Germans as long as the ghetto existed.
That was the time in which there were performances of the ghetto symphonic orchestra conducted by the composer Durmashkin; the choir performed Jewish folk-songs under the direction of Abram Slep.

A Yiddish theatre was created, largely due to the drive and endeavours of the chief of police, Yakov Gens, and of his assistant, Josef Glasman. A series of concerts was organized. Some of the songs performed had been composed in the ghetto. The performers Abram Bergolski, a newcomer from Russia, and Chayele Rosenthal, a native of Wilno, were especially popular.
We personally, grieving about the loss of those dear to us, did not attend any performances in the ghetto.

Perella remembers: A thirteen-year-old at that time, I would pace the congested, truncated alleys of the ghetto with my friends Lubka Kantarowicz and Ninka Kaplinska. We would look up at the sky, try to find some of the rare sunny crevices and dream about walking outside, looking up at the leafy trees, swimming in the river, inhaling the breeze, going to school. School seemed glorious, learning a privilege I aspired to rather than the drudge it used to be. I could not imagine how people free to enjoy all these wonders could possibly be unhappy - life would be so beautiful!

The quiet period in the ghetto was marred by an aktzye in the middle of July of 1942, which was carried out entirely by the Jewish police. The victims of the aktzye were about a hundred of elderly men and women. One day, when those able to work had gone to their workplaces, the Jewish police started to go from one apartment to another arresting elderly people of both sexes and taking them to the yard of the library on Straszuna No 6.

Returning from work that day I saw Yakov Gens with his lieutenant, the policeman Smilgowski, stand blocking the gate of Straszuna street No 6. Using their fists, they prevented the sons and daughters of those arrested from breaking through to their parents.

The following fact is indicative of the mood prevailing in the ghetto at that time, or rather of the moral decay of the multitude caused by the influence of Gens and his clique.

According to the generally accepted ethical rule of "Noblesse oblige" it is a leader's duty to serve as an example for his people.

When I asked, therefore:

"Why doesn't he (Gens) give his mother away?" my question was met with universal incredulity, since my demand seemed crazy to them.

"What, you expect that he would give his mother up?"

I was asked with distrust by a chorus of voices from the crowd.

This time there was a different twist in the way the Germans disposed of their victims.

According to the Jewish policemen who were escorting them, the elderly were taken to a boarding house in the summer place of Pospieszki.

Keeping them there a few days before sending them to Ponary, the Germans took many pictures of the elderly in the comfortable and beautiful surroundings, while they were being served by the Jewish policemen.

The reason for these proceedings was clear to us even at that time.

We know now that they were far from unique, part of the Nazi propaganda endeavor to deceive the world about what was happening to the eastern European Jewry.

However, the reason for this operation does not appear to be clear to the Israeli historian Arad even now when he describes the destruction of the Wilno Jewry in his book "Ghetto in flames".

For reasons unknown to me, and even less understandable, in his description of the "aktzye" against the elderly, Arad:

1. does not mention the important fact that the victims, before being sent to Ponary were photographed as relaxing in comfortable circumstances;
2. ignores the other weighty fact: that the elderly as an exception were not sent to Ponary from the Lukiszki prison but rather from the Pospieszki boardinghouse;
3. in his search for the obvious to all reason for this "aktzye", Arad finds nothing better than a quote from an axplanation of Gens: with this "aktzye" Gens was paying off an old debt with which the ghetto had been burdened.

This emphasizes an extra time the sly lying of Gens who was trying to excuse his treacherous doings.

A few days prior to this event the Gebietskomissar Hingst had subordinated the Judenrat to Gens, thus making him the official boss of the ghetto - a position which, in fact, was long his.

The Germans appointed Sala Desler head of the ghetto police. Sadly, by that time there could have been no doubt in our minds that Dessler, the son of our close acquaintances, was an agent of the Gestapo.
But before coming to the desription of subsequent events which, on one hand showed the Germans as accomplished tacticians in their war against the Jews, and on the other took away from most of us our last doubts about Gens being a traitor, I want to touch briefly on important events on the world scene.

As previously mentioned by me, the Balkan campaign which covered the German military with glory was also the main cause of the failure of the German "Blitzkrieg". After many victories the German army, unprepared for a winter campaign, was defeated in a decisive battle in the steppes under Moscow in which the Russians were very much helped by "General Winter". This fact faced Hitler with the prospect of having to fight the war on two fronts - the eventuality that he had hoped to avoid with a successful "Blitzkrieg".
According to my judgement, it was in order to tie down in the Pacific the armed forces of the United States and of Great Britain, (i.e. the powers which, Hitler feared, would attack him on the western front) that Germany's ally, Japan had entered the war...
On the morning of December 7th, 1941, Japan had suddenly launched an aereal attack on Pearl Harbor, the main American sea base in the Pacific; this partially destroyed and in part damaged the main American fleet standing there.
The United States was not at war with Germany at that time. However, President Franklin Roosevelt was undoubtedly presaging the coming entrance of the U.S. into the war on the side of Great Britain by giving the latter the use of 50 American minesweepers for her war with the German submarines; moreover, in March of 1941 the promulgation of the "Lend-Lease" legislation opened for England, and later Russia, credit for the acquisition of arms and food in the United States.
Hitler hoped that, with the entrance of Japan into the war, both Great Britain and the United States would rush to defend their Pacific possessions which were important as raw material sources; this would have afforded Hitler the possibility of throwing all his forces again into the coming campaign against Russia.
Fortunately for the cause of freedom, the leaders of the Democracies, Churchill and Roosevelt, found the neccessary wisdom to make the right conclusion that, however important the Pacific front may be, only a victory in Europe would be decisive in handing them Victory in the Second World War. But the cause of freedom would not be assured by just the right decision of which front was decisive for victory.
The English people, led by Winston Churchill, had to exhibit an iron will for victory, not shaken by the psychologically depressing defeats, and a readines to sacrifice important strategic points in the Pacific, in order to throw all the available resources to secure the decisive for Great Britain victory in Egypt, at El Alamein.
In that battle in October of 1942, the British 8th army led by the General Montgomery defeated the German Expeditionary Corps under Erwin Rommel which, after mastering the art of desert fighting, was previously victoriously progressing down the northern shore of Africa.
Rommel's defeat at El Alamein demolished Hitler's plans of conquering the vitally important sources of oil in the Middle East.
The glorious results of Germany's defeat at El Alamein are emphasized by the fact affirmed in his memoirs by Albert Speer, (the German Minister of War Supplies) that it was the lack of oil which forced Germany to capitulation in the spring of 1945.
Moreover, (as early as the summer of 1942) to prevent Hitler from concentrating all his forces against Russia, the Allies made two attempts, at Dieppe and St Nazaire, to land on the European continent,
With these operations the Allies had tied to the west a few tens of German divisions. These undoubtedly would have been useful to Hitler for carrying his initially successful summer campaign of 1942 all the way to complete victory on the eastern front.

Foremost of all the other causes which prevented Hitler from achieving his aim was clearly psychological: at the moment of greatest danger to Russia's existance as an independent nation,

Stalin let go of the trappings of International Communism and, as of yore, appealed to Russian people's patriotism, their love of their native land.
The other factor which awakened the Russian spirit of resistance and gave birth to the heroic defence of Stalingrad was the inhuman treatment to which the occupying authorities subjected the civilian population - in the conquered territories the Nazis brought new life into and mercilessly applied their racist theories.

But regardless of Russia's great depth which was able to swallow great penetration of enemy forces, notwithstanding the threat of an Allied landing on the western front in 1942, and in spite of the awakening of the Russian spirit of resistance, the Soviet Union could not have avoided catastrophy if the United States had not supplied Russia with millions of tons of provisions through the ports of the far east and through Persia which was occupied by the Allies.
As related to me by well-informed eye-witnesses, the food situation in Russia was more than desperate for two reasons:
1) Stalin's merciless collectivization of the villages, which was catastrophic in its effect on the agrarian production.
2) The occupation by Germany of Russia's fertile regions which usually gave bountiful harvests.
Thus in 1942 there was no food at all, not only for the city dwellers but, what was even more deadly, even for the soldiers at the fighting lines. I was told: "Of course, we were very much aided by the arms and the transport supplied us by the United States but we were saved by the American canned pork meat".
The German summer campaign was initially dazzlingly successful: In Russia the German armies reached the shores of the Volga river north of Stalingrad and simultaneously moved to the southeast, reaching the Caucasus mountains. In Africa general Rommel was swiftly nearing the oil fields of the Middle East.
But in spite of large territorial conquests, Hitler was unable to achieve victory on the eastern front. Disengagement in the east was urgently needed by him because of the entry into the war of the United States and of the Allied decision to sacrifice the Pacific in order to throw their main forces against Hitler in Africa as well as in Europe.
The inevitability of Germany's final defeat (in spite of their summer successes) began to be clearly foreshadowed when the events described by me were followed by defeats in Africa as well as in Russia.

It is time to return now to the description of events at home, in Lithuania. As I mentioned before, the collapse of the "Blitzkrieg" did not save the Jews of Lithuania, it merely postponed our extermination.
By the order of Wulf, the Komissar of the Wilno district - Land, Yakov Gens was appointed administator of the ghettos of the town Oshmiany and of those in villages Michalishki, Soly and Swienciany, in which the Germans had concentrated the (greatly diminished by systematic killings) Jewish population of the provinces adjacent to Wilno.
I would like to emphasize the suggestive fact that the Germans made subject to Gens the ghettos of places quite distant from Wilno whose inhabitants they intended to kill, but not the camp of "Kailis" (situated within the Wilno city limits) which they intended to preserve; it shows tellingly that they did not have Gens's administrative abilities in mind.
The successful accomplishment of Gestapo's bloody plans required first of all measures that would prevent a mass flight of the young Jews into the neighboring forests.
Under these cicumstances it is hard to explain as an accidental coincidence or, (even more so after so many disappointments), as due to Gens's credulity, the fact that he immediately traveled to the new ghettos entrusted to him and called upon the young people to stay put since there was no threat to their lives as long as they were working.
In October of 1942, on order of Gens and with the blessings of the Gestapo, a brigade of the Wilno Jewish ghetto police headed by Salek Desler, traveled to

Oshmiany where, out of the 4000 Jews living in the ghetto, they arrested about 500, mostly the elderly, and delivered them to the German executioners.
The expediency of this act in the light of the following general extermination of the Jews living in the Wilno provinces seems, at first glance, rather doubtful. Even more so since the "Oshmiany aktzye" had covered the Jewish police with enduring shame and strongly compromised the authority of its leaders.
In reality with the "Oshmiany aktzye" the Gestapo assured the 100% successful accomplishment of its bloody plans - with it they prevented the flight of the Jewish youths into the forest and assured the complete extermination without undue clamor of all the Jews who lived in the provinces.

Simultaneously the Germans demonstrated with this action that in them we confronted a diabolical, subtle and treacherous enemy who employed the supremely refined arts of strategy and tactics against us, just as he did on the battlefields of Europe and Africa.
After the "Oshmian aktzye" the rest of the population, though marked for extinction by the Germans, were tricked by the latter into believing that they were safe, since they had survived the selection "aktzye". Thus all 5000 of them walked into the nets set for them - and all perished.

I want to emphasize that the close cooperation of Yakov Gens contributed in no small measure to the accomplishment of the bloody plans of the Germans. After assurances from Gens, the "provincials" believed that they would be going by railroad to Kowno, where there was living space prepared for them and where they were needed for work. In another especially soothing announcement Gens said that some inmates of the Wilno ghetto would be going to Kowno in the same transport with them, headed by Oster, Gens's friend and co-worker, a native of Kowno.
Beginning with the early spring of 1943, the mostly young "provincials" began arriving in carts to the Wilno ghetto and were housed in synagogues and schools. They stood out by their healthy appearance against the background of the debilitated ghetto dwellers.
I remember that on the evening of April 4th (the eve of the departure of the "provincials" to Kowno), Grisha Karapans, one of my H.K.P. coworkers, whose sister was a manual worker in the Gestapo told me:
"Mr. Esterowicz, what is going on? My sister, coming from work told me that in the Gestapo there is great activity in connection with tomorrow's transport to Kowno. The fact that they brought in a great number of shovels and a quantity of lime does not bode well for the departing" (our executioners covered the corpses of the killed with lime). It is completely out of the question that Gens could have missed hearing from the manual Gestapo workers about the blood bath being readied for the departing by the Gestapo. Nevertheless we witnessed in the morning of April 5th, (the day of the transport's departure) Gens sending Jewish carpenters from the ghetto with the order to board up the windows of the freight cars of the transport.
The other significant piece of evidence against Gens is the fact that he had deceived the departing with the annoncement that some of his closest co-workers headed by Oster would be going on the transport to Kowno with them - in reality none of Gens's co-workers went on the transport.

Another piece of evidence: some eye-witnesses reported in the ghetto a fact which confirms the opinion that Gens knew that he was sending thousands of the young and healthy to their deaths. Gens and Desler rushed into the railroad station just as the transport was about to depart and pulled the wife of the ghetto policeman Rifkind from one of the carriages, after which he and Desler let themselves be arrested.

The transport left but did not go any further than the first stop on the road to Kowno...

Next day, on April 6th when our group came to work to the H.K.P. workshop, we were told that some gentile workers who lived in Landwarowo saw two freight trains parked on the Ponary siding while riding to work on motorcycles. We decided immediately that those must be the freight cars of the "provincial" Jews. Regrettably we were not mistaken.
As we subsequently learned, a large detachment of Germans and Lithuanians opened the freight cars one by one and clubbed those inside to the ditches where they shot them. Thus, during the day of April 6th, 1943, the Germans bestially massacred 5000 Jews from the provinces around Wilno. The fact that all the landscape around the railroad siding was covered with corpses showed that in spite of the beatings many of the victims tried to run away.
The task of gathering and burying the corpses fell to the Jewish police on orders of the Gestapo.

As can be expected all these events unnerved us immeasurably. To the sorrow about the perishing of 5000 young lives were joined other less than cheerful thoughts. The fact that the killed were healthy and ready for work destroyed the illusions cultivated in us by the Germans through their mouthpiece, Yakov Gens, that we were safe because we were needed as a work force. This in turn deprived us of hope for our own survival. Another terrible realization: our ghetto was headed by people who cooperated diligently with our deadly enemies in the enterprise of our annihilation. Gens's last "accomplishement" was too gross for it not to become obvious to most of us that he was an agent of the Gestapo.
I recollect that I shared my unhappy thoughts with a member of the Judenrat, the attorney Srolowicz with whom I was friendly. In reply he told me that, because of the mood of the ghetto, Gens summoned a special session of the Judenrat in which he admitted that he did know from the Gestapo that those on the transport to Kowno would be subject to a "selection" by the Gestapo, i.e. to a partial if not to a general killing.
It is interesting to note that subsequent to the loss of Gens's authority among the ghetto dwellers caused by these events, the Gestapo had tried to restore the people's trust in him - he was much too useful for their bloody plans to lose. Thus some of the officials of the Gestapo tried to give credit to Gens and Desler for the interruption in the process of our extermination which in reality was forced upon them by the failure of the "Blitzkrieg". In subsequent meetings of the work-group leaders (as recounted to me by its chairman, Dawid Kaplan-Kaplanski) both Martin Weiss, as well as the newly arrived Bruno Kittel, kept emphasizing Gens's and Desler's accomplishments for the benefit of the ghetto. They kept repeating "Das haben Sie diesen Menschen zu verdanken", pointing at Gens and Desler.
One should also note that the Gestapo realized that in connection with the destruction of the illusion that work would guarantee our survival, they could expect outbursts of resistance and of mass escapes from the ghetto - up to that time they were able to thwart them. This point of view gives us insight into the subsequent events of the summer of 1943, events linked with the names of Josef Glazman and Itzhak Wittenberg. They were nothing else but the desire of the Gestapo to strangle (through their agent, Gens) the embryo sources of potential organized resistance and mass flight from the ghetto.

The Warsaw ghetto uprising erupted in April of 1943 during the liquidation of the ghetto there; the misgiving that something similar might happen in

Wilno, whose ghetto they were also going to liquidate, made the above measures of particular interest for the Germans at that time.

I want to reemphasize that both in the liquidation of the ghettos in the Wilno area as well as in the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto itself the Germans found in Yakov Gens a diligent collaborator. Working from the inside, Gens paralyzed the attempts to organize any resistance, thus affording the Germans the possibility to realize their plans without the clamor and resistance they wanted to forestall.

Thus in June of 1943 we find Gens busily "liquidating" Josef Glazman, his former close friend and assistant in the administration of the ghetto, with whom Gens was linked for many years by their common work in the paramilitary organization of the Zionists-revisionists, the "Beitar".

Josef Glazman was the very popular leader of the clandestine "United Partisan Organization", the F.P.O. which was set up in the ghetto at the beginning of 1942. The leaders of the F.P.O. represented all the political parties and its stated purpose was armed resistance against the German's effort to exterminate us.

Glazman got into Gens's bad books as early as the fall of 1942 when Glazman refused to take part in the "reorganization" of the provincial ghettos undertaken by Gens on orders of the Gestapo; this ended, as we have seen, with the general extermination of the ghettos' inhabitants.

At that time Gens deprived Glazman of his position and sent him to the workcamp of Sorok Tatar where the Jews were supplying the ghetto with fuel. When Glazman returned to the ghetto upon completion of the work at Sorok Tatar he was arrested by the Jewish police. On Gens's orders they chained Glazman and put him on a cart intending to transport him forcibly to the peat works in Resza. However, the supporters of Glazman, (among them two officers of the ghetto police, Brause and Averbuch) had managed to free him at the gates of the ghetto . Subsequently, after negotiations between Gens and the partisan organization, Glazman agreed to leave the ghetto voluntarily. Intending to join a partisan brigade, headed by Markow, operating in the forests surrounding Lake Narocz, Glazman left the ghetto leading a group of some tens of people. However, as it was later told in the ghetto, after having managed to get just a few tens of kilometers away from the city, most of the members of that group perished in an ambush during the fording of the Wilenka river.

The reason for Glazman's expulsion from the ghetto was not Gens's jealousy of his great popularity, as Mark Dworzecki pointed out in his book. As it was relayed to me by Chwoles, a man who worked with me in the H.K.P. and whose daughter was married to the policeman Brause (Brause and his young wife had shared Glazman's destiny), the antagonism between these close friends was caused by something much more serious. Glazman did not believe the assurances of the Germans that work could be our passport to life and thus he protested against Gens's policy of lulling us with baseless promises. Glazman called on Gens to organize an armed resistance and fight if the Germans should demand more victims. Apparently what Gens, serving our enemies, could not stand was Glazman's going from words to deeds. As the representative of the Beitar Glazman organized the "United Partisan Organisation", the F.P.O., together with the leaders of the other parties, and they started to recruit members and purchase arms.

Even before Glazman's departure from the ghetto we went through some frightening days in connection with the attempt by the Jewish police to arrest upon Gens's orders the head of the F.P.O., the communist Itzhak Wittenberg, who worked as the manager of the communal bath on Strashuna No. 6. However, as it happened before with the arrest of Glazman, Wittenberg was freed by a crowd (consisting mostly of F.P.O. members). At this point Gens proclaimed to the inhabitants of the ghetto that Kozlowski, a communist arrested in town by the Gestapo, had pointed Wittenberg out as an active member of the communist party. The Gestapo was demanding the delivery of Wittenberg - the ghetto's very existence depended on our complying with this demand. It was hard to determine how much truth there was in Gens's declaration - especially since by that time Kozlowski was dead. However, the following facts make us accept Gens's words with great circumspection:

a) The arrest of Wittenberg, the head of the F.P.O., was initiated only after the Germans, having decided to liquidate our ghetto, wanted to forestall any organized resistance.

b) Some similar measures: the expulsion of Glazman, the episode with the policeman Averbach (which we will see), originated from Gens who, we should assume, acted upon the instructions of the Gestapo.

The majority of the ghetto dwellers did believe Gens, however, and there began on the streets of the ghetto fights between the Jewish police, supported by the members of the Jewish criminal class, (di shtarke - the strong ones) to whom Gens had turned for aid on one side, and on the other the members of the F.P.O. supported by ghetto youths, who tried to forestall Wittenbeg's arrest,

The attempts of the police to find Wittenberg were not successful, but Gens managed to convince the leaders of the F.P.O. - Chyena Borowska (a communist), Aba Kowner, and others that to save the ghetto it was imperative for them to give Wittenberg up to the Gestapo. When Wittenberg was informed about the sentiments of his comrades he came out of hiding and voluntarily gave himself up to the Gestapo, where he managed to commit suicide by swallowing potassium cyanide (KCN) during the interrogation.

We should remeber that the leaders of the F.P.O. have not saved the ghetto by believing Gens and sacrificing Wittenberg, their leader.

As we will see the fate of the Wilno ghetto was already sealed. Gens arrested the policeman Averbach for his part in the freeing of Glazman. After a little while he delivered Averbuch to the Gestapo - the latter was let out from there only after he agreed to become an agent of the Gestapo.

In July the Germans liquidated the work-camps in Biela Waka, Resza, Bezdany and Kena. The workers of the last two were subjected to a horrible death by Bruno Kittel. As a reprisal for some of them having run away to the forest, Kittel locked the remaining workers in wooden sheds which he set on fire, burning the hapless workers alive.

Acting according to a previously worked out strategy, simultaneously with the maneuver which deprived the F.P.O. of their leaders, the Gestapo instituted the merciless rule of mutual responsibility; in order that their victims shouldn't slip out of their hands by running away from the ghetto, they made the crew leaders responsible for the presence of workers of their crews - thus at the end of July they shot two of these crew leaders. One of the executed, a refugee from Warsaw named Wlodowski, was a close acqaintance of mine.

The atmosphere in the ghetto was getting ever more close, we felt that we were nearing denouement.

I would like to note a rather interesting fact: as the events of the war became unfavorable for the Germans, Gens began to listen to the voices of the ghetto communists. "Gens is starting to play on two pianos, just in case" was the sarcastic whisper in the ghetto.

That was the time when the wheel of fortune was finally turning decisively against Hitler in the theater of military operations.

On the eastern front, the initial successes of the German armies against the Soviet Union, with their large territorial conquests, ended for them with the catastrophe of Stalingrad: six German armies commanded by general Paulus were surrounded and had to surrender in the beginning of February, 1943, after having lost about a quarter million soldiers in dead and captured. Thrown back from the river Volga, the Germans had to withdraw from the Caucasus, losing the quite significant for them oil fields around Grozny and Maikop.
One should acknowledge the continued superiority of German armies, the cruel Stalingrad defeat notwithstanding. As late as the spring of 1943, the German armies commanded by general Eric Manstein defeated near Kharkov the Russian armies commanded by marshall Timoshenko, taking hundreds of thousands prisoner.
Only in July of 1943 was the German superiority decisively broken in the battle near Kursk where the Russians were able to withstand the combined attack of the German tanks and of the dive-bombers.

The news from the western war theaters were also less than hopeful for the Germans. In November of 1942 the American armies, commanded by general Eisenhouer, landed on the shores of Africa without resistance from the French armies commanded by admiral Darlaine, an agent of the Vichy government. Consequently all the Italian and German armies then in Africa were caught between the American armies attacking from the west toward the east and the British 8th army of general Montgomery attacking from the east toward the west; they thus had to capitulate in the spring of 1943.
Thereafter the Allies, in control of the Mediterranean sea with their War Fleets, landed in Sicily, overcoming the resistance of the Italians. These events evoked a political upheaval in Rome where the king Vittorio Emanuele demoted Benito Mussolini and appointed general Badoglio premier. The latter arrested Mussolini and immediately made arrangements for armistice with the Allies.
The German reaction to the loss of their Italian ally was swift and not without success. The armies of the general Kesselring, thrown by the Germans onto the Appenine peninsula, managed to disarm the Italian forces and stop the northward movement of the Allied forces which had landed in Salerno on the approaches to Rome in Monte Cassino.
The bleak situation of Germany was made even more critical by the ceaseless bombing by the Allies (British at night, American in the daytime) of not only the industrial centers but, (as a repayment for Rotterdam, London and Coventry) also of the German cities, causing great destruction and losses among the civilian population.

The military failures and the realization, that with defeat would come the time of reckoning for the crimes they have committed, did not halt the Nazis from the murder of innocent people; the Nazi's war against the Jews continued with unabated fervour.
The death factories built by the Germans in conquered Poland in Oswiencim, Treblinka, Maidanek and Sobibor, with their gas chambers and crematoriums were barely able to keep up with the extermination of the Jews brought in transports from all the European countries occupied by the Germans.

We witnessed the bloody liquidation of the Jewish population of all the towns and cities of western Byelorussia; there the "Final Solution of the Jewish question" was implemented during the summer of 1943, later than in Lithuania.
The tension in the ghetto was growing, even though we still continued to go to work every morning. Feeling that we were nearing the final event, the active people (I'm afraid I was not one of them), began to prepare some havens for themselves. Some on the outside, having provided themselves with counterfeit documents, others inside the ghetto utilizing basements, attics and the city sewers.

The awaited events were not long in coming. The liquidation of our ghetto began actually at the beginning of August of 1943, when the Germans had arrested some crews returning from work to the ghetto and loaded them into a railroad transport which they were told would take them to Vaivary, a work camp in Estonia. We were slightly calmed by the fact that, in contrast to the former practice in which people supposedly taken to work were actually ending in Ponary, this time letters arrived in the ghetto from which we learned that Vaivary was not a myth, it actually existed. After a couple weeks this was repeated. A few hundred people returning from work were again caught by the Germans and sent to Vaivary. Even though the percentage of people working for the Germans was continually growing (by now even our thirteen-year-old Perella was working, sorting and cleaning German army coats), we knew that the catastrophe was near.

The cataclysm was upon us in full force on September 1st, 1943. When we woke up at dawn to go to work we heard from our neighbors about the panic reigning in the ghetto, everybody looking for a hiding place.

During the night soldiers, this time Estonian, surrounded the ghetto and wouldn't let anybody out.

We next heard that the Estonian patrols had entered the ghetto and were seizing men.

When we and the Zlatins rushed outside, looking for a place to hide, we passed the gate of the house on Straszuna 4. The inhabitants of that house (my wife's cousin Jasha Shapiro and my former customer Zelman Kacew among them), motioned for us to go in before they would clang the gate shut. We hurried in - the Estonian patrols were closing in. One of the basements of the house in the back of the yard was transformed into a "malina", a hiding place in which we hid for two days. From women whom the "aktzye" initially did not touch we heard about the happenings in the ghetto:

the houses on Straszuna No 12 and 15 had been blown up when the inhabitants refused to leave their hiding places;

the Jewish police, headed by Gens, was taking a most active part in the hunting down of men for transport to Estonia;

the aktzye did not touch the "privileged" who, wearing an armband were able to move freely in the ghetto;

in the Jewish hospital Gens personally marked the majority of the medical personnel for deportation to Estonia and physically insulted Dr. Sedlis when the latter protested against that action.

When we heard that our house on Straszuna 1 was untouched by this aktzye, since it housed the manual workers of the Gestapo, we returned to our room on the evening of September 2nd. This was an incautious step - on the morning of September 3rd, Neugebauer, the chief of the Wilno Gestapo, accompanied by Salek Desler, came into the yard of our house with a crowd of Gestapo officials and announced that all the men living in that house are to pack immediately and go down into the yard in order to be sent to Estonia. At that moment there was nothing for me to do but submit to my fate. However after I had already sat down for good luck (in a gute mazldike shoh) before leaving, with the bag already on my shoulder, my wife delayed me saying that after all I was not a worker of the Gestapo but of the H.K.P., she wanted to go and talk to Desler about it. When my wife approached Desler and started to beg him to let me stay pointing out that I was not a Gestapo worker, he brusquely refused her plea. When my wife continued to plead a German suddenly demanded "what does this woman want?" When Desler told him that she was asking for permission for her husband, a H.K.P. worker, to stay, the German (who we later learned was the Gestapo chief for all of Lithuania) shrugged and remarked: "this one can stay for the time being". My wife needed nothing more. In this terrifying situation we had a truly joyful minute when my wife ran in with the wonderful news that I could stay. After hearing these news our neighbors, a carpenter and a shoemaker who worked for the Gestapo, took off their bags and hid under the beds.

But no sooner did the Gestapo officials and their captives leave the yard then Gens and Smilgowski rushed in to verify whether the orders of the Gestapo had been carried out. When they found out in some way that the engineer Malkiel, a native of Kowno, had stayed behind Gens started shouting: Malkiel Malkiel...

Under these circumstances my wife leaned out of the window and said that the Gestapo had permitted her husband to stay, upon which Smilgowski made a sign that I shouldn't move and I did not.

In the evening of this eventful day we and the Zlatins who had returned, having left the "meline" went to my wife's brother David Gerstein to learn from him what the situation of the ghetto was. David and my wife's sister Rachil lived on Rudnicka 7. My brother-in-law knew how to make himself well liked, especially by those who could be useful to him. He was able to make Gens, the ruler of our destinies, enjoy his company. Their relations bacame even more friendly after David supplied the ghetto with fuel when he was in charge of the woodcutting in Sorok Tatar. Thus during the "Estonian aktzye", while we were hiding in the meline, David was able to move freely in the ghetto, provided with an armband which made him secure against both the Germans and the Jewish police.

From Rachil we learned that her friends, Anatol Fried, the head of the Judenrat, and its member, the engineer Guchman, had assured her that the ghetto would continue to exist.

David came back after seeing Gens late at night and informed us that he learned from the latter that the Gestapo chief Neugebaur demanded 2000 women from Gens - thus next day there would be an aktzye against women.

Rachil and David's wife Mera got ready to go to Anatol Fried where they thought they would be safe. When we asked them to take Perella with them they thought they would rather not. We and the Zlatins decided to try and go tomorrow morning to the parents of the ghetto chief of police Desler, hoping that they would give us shelter. The old Deslers lived with their son on Rudnicka 4 in the house of the Judenrat.

When we came into the yard of Rudnicka 4 on the morning of September 4th, we heard Gens addressing a crowd from the balcony with the following speech:

"Fellow Jews, I managed to obtain the permission of the Gestapo for the wives and children of those deported to Vaivary to join their husbands and fathers!"

With this treacherous trick Gens managed to lure 1300 women and children who believed him into volunteering to go to Vaivary. After hunting all day in the ghetto, Kittel and the Jewish police managed to seize the lacking 700 victims and force them onto the transport.

The treachery of Gens is made even more horrible by the fact we learned after our liberation - the transport of the women and children was not sent to their husbands but to the gas-chambers of one of the camps in Poland.

According to Mrs Shapiro, (the wife of Dr. Rifkind's nephew) who had been on that transport with her child, their train turned around immediately after their arrival in Vaivary and went in the opposite direction. She managed to jump out of the railroad car at the Eidkunen station in East Prussia and had thus survived.

As a defense of Gens's shameful deeds one often hears the argument that if not he but the Germans had carried out the "aktzyes", "it would have been

worse". I ask: worse for whom? Certainly not for the many thousands whom Gens and the police acting on his orders sent to their deaths.
In this case worse off could be only those who, by pushing others to their deaths, had hoped to save their own lives, a hope in which they turned out to be cruelly wrong.

The older Deslers kindly took us into their apartment. We and the Zlatins did not err in our hope that we would find a safe shelter for the women there (women were hunted on September 4th).
After the "four day aktzye" that started on September 1st, the Germans granted us a respite. However, the fact that we were forbidden to leave the ghetto and the Jews stopped going out to work in the city, augured ominously that the days of the ghetto were numbered.
For me, the fact that I was cut off from the H.K.P. workshop on Wilenska 23 was in addition connected with a painful financial loss. In the automobile part stockroom, which I had managed for more than two years, I had secreted among the merchandise three antique enamelled gold bracelets and two gold pocket watches. Boleslaw Poddany with whom I managed to communicate by letter informed me that he did not find tha valuables in the spot indicated by me.

Into the ensuing dismal days filled with the fear for our lives there came a sudden ray of hope: tidings came to the ghetto that Major Plagge, the chief of H.K.P. 562, had succeded, after lots of requests (he even had to go to Berlin to achieve this) to contrive a work camp for the Jews working in his establishmnet. The authorities designated for this camp the buildings of the so-called "cheap housing" on Subocz street. They had been built still during the times of the Czar by the Jewish Colonizing Society and financed by the Jewish philantropist, baron Hirsh.

Since a large number of the H.K.P. workers had been deported to Estonia during the September "four day aktzye", initially there was a possibility for some outsiders to be included into the number of workers about to go to the newly opened work camp H.K.P. I took advantage of this opportunity and inscribed my niece Eva and her husband, the engineer Leon Szelubski into the list of the H.K.P. workers. They were the only surviving members of my family, I did not want to be separated from them since they needed my regular financial support. We still had some valuables which we sold as needed to buy food.
My brother-in-law Naum Zlatin did not succeed in his attempt to get into the H.K.P. camp. Salek Desler, who had been very helpful to him on many previous occasions refused to do so this time. In addition, my wife's other sister, Rachil Cholem, asked the Zlatins to stay with her in the ghetto, which she assured them would continue to exist. She got this assurance from the engineer Guchman, a member of the Judenrat with whom she was more than friendly.
Our departure for the camp H.K.P. was set for September 16th.
Two days before, on September 14th, the ghetto was shocked by the news that Gens had been killed. He had been summoned to the Gestapo on that morning and the Gestapo chief Neugebaur personally shot him at Rossa, the place on the outskirts of town where the Gestapo arranged an asylum for about seventy of their Jewish manual workers and their families, headed by their foreman Kamenmacher.

Legends were created in the ghetto about the death of Gens. His defenders averred that he perished at his post, defending the interests of the ghetto and that by his death (which supposedly he could have avoided) Gens cleansed himself from all accusations. In reality the Gestapo as a rule killed all their treacherous agents as soon as they, "having done their job" were needed no more. The same fate overtook the Kaunas journalist Serebrowicz (Kaspia) after he had helped the Germans realize their bloody plans for Kowno, in the fall of 1941.

The Germans sent Serebrowicz to Wilno where he was killed by them.

The Gestapo also killed absolutely all of their agents-Jews, beginning with Sala Desler who, foreseeing what reward was coming to him, had futilely attempted to run away from his fate, and ending with Averbuch, Nika Dreyzin and Yona Bak. The latter, a dental technician by profession, was recruited by the Gestapo-man Tindis while we were already in the camp H.K.P. They became friendly while Bak was performing some technical work for Tindis. Apparently Tindis was able to talk Bak into becoming an agent by assuring him that for this he would be rewarded with his life.

"For this I am ready to pay any price", Bak justified himself to his acquaintances.

However, some, like Averbuch, had been coerced by the Gestapo into serving them. After having arrested Averbuch as a follower of Glazman, the Gestapo told him that he could avoid death only by agreeing to become an agent.

During the night of July 2nd, 1944, the day of the liquidation of the H.K.P. camp I accidentally heard the "unbosoming" of Averbuch's wife when, justifiying the acts of her husband she said: "we were young and we wanted to live". Averbuch as well as Bak had been executed by that time. They had both been used against the Poles.

In my opinion, the different evaluation of Gens's role in our tragedy is due to the fact which his defenders do not take into account: the reality that in the Gestapo we had a merciless and treacherous enemy whose aim was not only to exterminate us, we should also disappear quietly and without resistance. Even though resistance on our part was senseless, given the huge inequality of forces, the Germans could still be offered resistance from people who knew that they had nothing to lose. Gens was not needed by the Gestapo in order to exterminate us. For that they found eager and diligent helpers in the Lithuanians.

But Gens was needed by the Gestapo for the accomplishment of their second aim. Gestapo needed a Jew who on one hand would convince us that we could save ourselves through work and on the other hand would, working from the inside, smother any attempt for organized resistance.

Gestapo wanted us to trust Gens and give him authority - on this depended his efficacy in carrying out his mission. Thus they tried to lead us astray about his real role. Thus we see Gens in the role of the deliverer of Jews arrested by the Gestapo, the patron of the arts and one who helped the Judenrat in the organization of life in the ghetto.

One has to admit that it is possible that Gens got induced into his treacherous work only gradually, and that he had been made the obedient tool of our deadly enemies through coercion.

The judgement of history in this case should be tempered by this circumstance. After all, Genses refusal to obey would have brought his immediate death and thus demanded heroism from him - a trait we have no right to demand. But even though Gens's guilt might have been tempered (but not excused) by a circumstance which we have no right to exclude, the Judgement of History has to apply all its severity in its condemnation of Gens for the extraordinary zeal displayed by him in his treacherous work, his heartless brutality and his shameless brazen favoritism.

All my life I was proud of having my roots in Wilno.

As early as the 18th century, when a wave of mysticism and emotion flooded the Jewish world, Wilno was able to preserve the rational method in its religious thinking; in the last tens of years of its existance Wilno was the Mecca of the secular Jewish culture and thought.

I am proud to belong to a Jewish community which held its head high, discarding the "yellow patch" which, through the centuries, the hostile Christian environment attempted to affix onto us.

But I hang my head when I think about the time of the five-hundred-year-old Wilno Jewish community's unworthy death - about the period connected with the name of Yakov Gens.

Gens belonged to those strong personages who, occupying a key position, put their brand on the character of the epoch in which they play a part.

There can be no doubt that, due to Gens's corrupting influence, at the time when the community was at the end of its days, there was no inspiration to great deeds of self-sacrifice; instead, it was a time when many people were ready to pay any price for saving their own lives.

Even though Gens's activity was perpetrated against all the ethical laws of God and of man (he assumed the right to decide who was to live and who was to die), it still found support among the members of the Judenrat and among the other "privileged".

Unfortunately, neither the work of our police who sent their brethern to their deaths, nor the expulsion of Josef Glazman, nor the delivery of Itzhak Wittenberg to the Gestapo bring us honor...

In place of the executed by them Gens, the Gestapo put their other agent, Salek Desler, to head the ghetto during its last days.

Two days later, on September 16th, 1943 we left the ghetto together with my niece Eva and her husband Leon Shelubski and went to live in the camp provided for his Jewish workers through the endeavors of the German Major Plagge, the chief of the H.K.P. 562.

H.K.P.

We move to the work-camp H.K.P. on Sept. 16, 1943
We learn about the liquidation of the ghetto on Sept. 23rd, 1943
Mula Gerstein and family end miraculously in Kailis
Ida manages to bring the Gersteins to H.K.P.
Ida & Perella work in workshops
Perella's memories of barely escaping aktzye of "grabbing women"
Major Plagge's kindness
Life in H.K.P., vital importance of books
The children's performance
The children aktzye on the day after
Perella finds Zmigrod's maline, hides there during children aktzye
The fate of Mosya Cholem and family
Feverish work to finish building Zmigrod's maline
Major Plagge's warning
We descend into the maline on July 2nd, 1943
Experiences in the meline
Coming out during German retreat

As mentioned previously the H.K.P. camp was placed by the authorities on the outskirts of town on Subocz street, in the "Cheap hygienic apartments" built by the Jewish Colonizing society.

Apprently filled with bad forebodings, my wife's sister Vera cried bitterly when we said good-bye. Vera and her husband Naum remained to live with my wife's other sister, Rachil, who had believed the assurances of her close friends, the Judenrat members Fried and Guchman, that the ghetto would survive. My wife's brother David had left the ghetto a few days before and went to a village where a peasant agreed, for some remuneration, to hide and feed him and his wife Mera. My wife's brother Mula remained in the ghetto with his wife and son. Before leaving the ghetto David handed over to Mula the secret of his "maline" which was built in the city sewers and in which Mula and his family hid during the liquidation of the ghetto.

The work camp H.K.P. to which we had moved, consisted of two long, stone, three-story buildings, in which were located both the workshops and the dwellings of the workers; it was standing in the midst of a large empty parcel of land. We were separated from the rest of the world by walls of barbed wire which were patrolled by the Lithuanian police.
The entrance gate of the camp was located on Subocz street and the back bordered the Rossa outskirts of town. We settled in a room on the first floor of a separate, lower wing of the right-hand building. We shared the room with Aleksanra Grigorievna, the wife of the deported by the Bolsheviks attorney, Ilya G Zaks, and her cousin, Rosa Milecka, a native of Minsk.
My niece Eva and her husband settled in the next room to the right of ours, which they shared with the families of Yefim Zalkind and the architect Rabinovich from Kowno. In the room to the left of us lived my cousin Nina and her husband, Kuba Rotstein (their son Tolek was killed by the "khapuny"). They shared the room with the engineer Arik Malkiel, a native of Kowno and his wife Genya, born Finn and also with Alberg, a native of Memel and his wife Yocheved (Shadowska). In the last room of our corridor lived, together with his cousin engineer Swirski and a man named Panzer, the attorney Zmigrod from Bendzin who subsequently played an important role in our survival.

Our camp, as well as "Kailis" was under the administration and subjected to the Nazi "S.S.", embodied in a long-necked German whom we had nick-named "Golosheyka" (little bare neck). The latter commanded our camp through a native of Wilno, Nyona Kolysz, appointed by the Jewish self-government. Kolysh enjoyed the same power and performed the same functions for us as did Gens in the ghetto.
The technical control of the workshops rested in the hands of the German army through two so-called "Schirmeisters" (one of them was named Drescher) subordinate to the chief of the H.K.P., Major Plagge.
As was mentioned by me before, it was thanks to the endeavors of Major Plagge, who was guided by his desire to protect his Jewish workers, that the dwellers of H.K.P., numbering over 1000, were able to avoid, at least temporarily, the fate of those Jews who remained in the ghetto.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Major Plagge, our protector (who, in addition, according to those who had personal contact with him, was a man of the highest moral character - as we also ascertained later) was much beloved and respected by us.
The central workshop of the H.K.P. which was still located in the buildings of the Technical School on Antokol maintained its connection with us by means of a truck alotted to us with its driver, the German soldier Beck. Every day Beck would drive to the central workshops, delivering the fulfilled orders and bringing the needed materiel and parts.

A few days after our transfer to H.K.P. Salek Desler (appointed by the Germans to head the ghetto instead of Gens) came suddenly to the camp. In additon to his parents, whom he placed in our room, he also brought Rosa Semionovna Bunimowicz (the sister-in-law of the late banker) and the dentist Dora M. Katz-Wider.

Apparently foreseeing that he would share the fate of Gens, Desler did not return to the ghetto and hid with his wife Rega in a previously prepared melina.

Deslers's disappearance was immediately noticed by the Gestapo - they shot his parents in Ponary on the same day and began an intensive search for him.

In place of Desler, for the few days remaining to the ghetto (the ghetto of Wilno ceased to exist on September 23rd, 1943) the Germans had put Borys Beniakonski, a native of Kowno.

We learned about the liquidation of the ghetto of Wilno on the morning of that day from B. Beniakonski whom the Germans brought to H.K.P. with his wife and daughter. A little later Niusia, the wife of Dr. Koniurski, came to H.K.P. accompanying, as a registered nurse, a woman in the midst of childbirth, whom the Germans had sent to our camp from Rossa where they were carrying out a "selection".

From Beniakonski and Niusia we learned the following details:

In the early morning of the 23rd of September, 1943, the Gernan authorities announced, after they had surrounded the ghetto with a brigade of Ukrainians, that the Wilno ghetto was being liquidated. All the ghetto-inmates should, for their own good, go with their luggage to the gate, from where they would be transported to work-camps in Estonia and Latvia. The majority of the inmates obeyed the order and appeared at the gate with their families.

They were taken to Rossa, to a square surrounded by police, where the men were separated from their families, i.e. from their wives and children. In spite of rain the Jews were kept outside all night until the following day when the Germans bagan to carry out a selection. After about 100 elderly men were separated and immediately sent to Ponary, the men were sent in railroad cars to the work-camps in Estonia. From the women the Germans selected 1500 women who they deemed were able to work and had sent them to Latvia, to the work-camp Keiserwald, from where there began to arrive to H.K.P. letters (from Genia Zeldowicz). The remaining women, including young women with small children, the children (the orphans were not left alone in that tragic moment by their self-sacrificing protector, Doctor Shabad-Gavronska), numbering about 5000, the Germans sent to the gas chambers in one of the camps in Poland.

Perella remembers: We heard a heartbreaking story: During the selection on Rossa a young acquaintance of ours told her beautiful, bright four-year-old daughter named Hermina to stand away from her with some other people. Apparently her rejecting the child did not save the mother - we never saw her after the war.

The Jews on Rossa were witnesses on September 24th, when Kittel, the liquidator of the ghetto, hanged Abram Chwojnik and three other Jews for shooting at and critically wounding a German Gestapo-man.

As we later learned, among the women sent to their deaths by the Germans were my wife's sisters Rachil Cholem and Vera Zlatin and also Rashel, the wife of my friend Alosha Perevozki and her mother Eva Matveevna.

We had kept in constant touch with the Perevozkis who lived in the ghetto in the "doctor's block". At the liquidation of the ghetto Alosha and his brilliant son Marek were sent to Estonia from where they were both transported to Germany. They both perished from starvation Alosha in Dachau and Marek who worked in the stone quarries of SouthWest Germany succumbed just on the eve of the coming of the American army there.

One should note that all those (like members of the police and of the Judenrat and their families) who, during the numerous aktzyes that the ghetto had been subjected to had enjoyed complete protection, at the time of the liquidation of the ghetto (with the exception of Beniakonski) had to share the common destiny. This time the Gestapo was merciless toward them too.
As we only learned after our arrival to the United States, the fate of the Zlatins was especially cruel. According to an eye-witness (Adele Baj), when they were being chased from their apartment, Naum Ionovich had a heart attack; Vera had been forced by a cruel Ukrainian to leave her dying husband lying on the stairs and go alone on her thorny way, which brought her to the gas chambers in the end.

But not all the ghetto dwellers left the ghetto as commanded by the Germans on September 23rd. On that day, or even a little earlier, the members of the combat organizations numbering a few hundred succeeded in getting through, predominantly to the Rudnicki Forest where the partisans were operating under the command of Zinmanas, a Jew sent From Moscow.
But a much larger number of Jews hid on that day in the "melines" readied by them before. My wife's brother Samuel (Mula) hid in the "melina" located in the city sewer with his wife, son and mother-in-law.
However, only a very few of those who hid managed to survive.
Most of them ended in the hands of the Gestapo:
either when they attempted to reach the Jewish camp "Kailis" which was guarded by Jewish police only;
or when, after the Germans had cut off water in the area of the ghetto, they were forced to look for water in the Gentile area.
The behaviour toward them of the Gentile population contributed greatly toward the destruction of the majority of those Jews who attempted to run away from fate by hiding in "melinas". That behaviour was indifferent at best and was basically hostile.
After holding the arrested Jews in the vaults of the Gestapo on Mickiewicza street for some time, the Germans would send them in large groups to Ponary for execution.
At that time some individual Jews began to arrive to our camp - they were given their lives by Kittel at the place of execution in exchange for large sums of gold hidden by them. One of such "fortunate ones" was, as I recollect, named Shub, the owner before the war of a wholesale stationary business. Among those who came to our camp from Ponary was the wife and son of my former customer Zhukowski, the owner of an apothecary business. Kittel was so impressed with the exceptional beauty of the boy, especially by his huge black eyes with their long lashes, that he sent the boy and his mother to our camp.

After the liquidation of the ghetto, our insecurity about the fate of the numerous members of my wife's family whom we had left in the ghetto kept my wife and myself under terrible stress. The information we received that Ida's brother Mula with his wife and son were in "Kailis" was joyful but also deeply shocking. Mula with his son Gershon, his wife Nina and her mother were caught and thrown into the cellars of the Gestapo when, after having left the "maline" they attempted to get through to "Kailis". As they were being sent to Ponary, Kitttel granted the pleas of Kamenmacher, the crew-leader of the manual workers of the Gestapo, and agreed to send to "Kailis" Mula, Nina and Gera but not Nina's mother.
Finding themselves thus in "Kailis" without clothes or money, they turned to us for help. Since we were able to communicate with "Kailis" (I can't remember

how) we sent them 12,000 rubles and a large package of clothing. To our distress the package did not reach our family, it was intercepted and appropriated by one Motl Baran who was in their "melina" and managed to get to "Kailis".
However Mula's problems were not only monetary - we knew that their situation as non-resident newcomers in "Kailis" was very precarious.
Since the fact that many hundreds of refugees from the Wilno ghetto had found a haven in Kailis was known to the Gestapo, the latter began demanding from the administration of Kailis to supply people for work - those people would never come back. The administration of Kailis, who had no other recourse but to comply with the demands of the Gestapo, would send out the newcomers in such cases.
Thus about 70 newcomers had been taken for a crew which, chained, were kept in a pit in Ponary where they had to dig up and burn the corpses of the many tens of thousands of victims, in a German attempt to cover up their monstruous crimes.
Somewhat earlier, upon the demand of the Gestapo, an even larger group, consisting solely of the "newcomers", was sent from Kailis to Riga.
Thus Kailis was a very insecure place for Mula to remain in, even though it was a point of transit which gave some refugees from the ghetto (Dr. Ilya Sedlis, for instance) a chance to prepare a haven on the Aryan side and survive.
Access to the camp H.K.P. was more difficult than to Kailis since it was fenced in by barbed wire whose perimeter was patrolled by the Lithuanian police, but the situation of those who managed to get in was more stable.

Since the camps H.K.P. and Kailis were controlled by the same "S.S" official nicknamed by us "Golosheyka" (bare neck), my wife bagan to endlessly implore Kolysz, the chief of our camp, for him to ask "Golosheyka" to transfer Mula and his family from Kailis to our camp. At first she was unsuccessful, tears and entreaties did not help, what did help was the intervention of Yasha Shapiro, my wife's cousin, who was Kolysz's brother-in-law (their wives were sisters, daughters of Goldberg, at one time the co-owner a fabric store, "Goldberg and Bengin").
To our great joy, soon afterward, upon Kolysz's request "Golosheyka" brought Mula and his family to our camp.
Since Mula had no means of sustenance I began to give him daily 200 rubles.

In H.K.P., just as it used to be in the ghetto, it was possible to bribe the Lithuanian police. Taking advantage (by paying him), of Beck's military truck, sufficient quantities of different foodstuffs, including even alcoholic beverages, were brought into the camp. If my memory serves me, a kilogram of bread costed 30 rubles. The so-called "cooperative" food store was situated on the floor below our room. It was managed by my close acquaintance, Lusik Wilkomir, a former bank employee. The rations which we received from the authorities were distributed and the foodstuffs which Wilkomir bought on the "free market" were sold there.

The sympathy toward us of Major Plagge, the chief of H.K.P., had put its stamp not only on our working conditions but on the whole way we lived. Personally I worked not too laboriously as the stockroom keeper of the workshop for vehicle seat-repair. We worked from 6 Am to 6 PM with one hour interruption for dinner, which I ate in our room with my family.
In the room which we shared with people with whom we arranged to live and in which there was running water and a kitchen stove, we slept in beds and

were able to wash ourselves and to cook. Using hired help we were frequently able to change our personal and bed linen and even had a carry-out privy which we placed in a cubby-hole under the staircase - thus we did not have to use the filthy, stinking enclosed pit in the courtyard. The cubby-hole played a crucial role in our survival, as we will see later.

Similarly to how it was in the ghetto, the living conditions (as long as one was permitted to stay alive) largely depended upon the financial means one possessed.

My financial losses notwithstanding, we still had in the camp, in addition to a gold ten ruble coin (the remainder from the sale of the persian lamb coat), a massive golden cigarette case and a platinum mounted 1 1/2 carat diamond ring. All this my wife carried on her abdomen under her girdle. However, since we did not know how long we would be incarcerated, and there was the neccessity of helping our relatives, we ate very modestly.

At the gate of the camp there stood a small building which had an entrance from the street and served as a receiving station where the camp administration would receive the orders for the needs of the German military. Since Jews served in this receiving station, it was a place where we could meet the Gentiles who had access to it and where deals could be made. It was there that a little later I sold to the Pole Lachowicz (the assistant manager of the H.K.P. workshop on Wilenska 23 where I had worked previously) the golden cigarette case for 220 gold rubles. The cigarette case weighed about 200gm and was the work of "Morozow".

At this point I would like to mention an interesting fact: since the peasants (the main buyers of gold) demanded golden ten ruble pieces excluively, the market price of the latter in paper money was twice that of the golden English pound which contained the same amount of gold.

Returning to the description of our lives in the camp, one should add that Borys Beniakonski, who managed in the ghetto the workshops which serviced the needs of the German army, had organized the same kind of workshops in the camp H.K.P. My wife worked in the workshop which repaired German army coats, and our fourteen-year-old daughter worked in the one where the heels were knitted on to the torn and dirty socks of the German soldiers.

For medical help for the camp population (which numbered more than one thousand) two physicians, the doctors Feignberg and Shumiliski, some nurses and the dentist Swerdlina came to the camp at the same time we did.

Simultaneously with us, some members of the ghetto Jewish police: Tovbin, Migantz, Witkowski and Sakin settled in the camp, to maintain order, but mainly to carry out the orders of the German authorities.

In our camp lived also those Jews who were known agents of the Gestapo: Averbuch and Nikka Dreizin. The first with his wife, the other with his mother. To these two was added a third one - Jona Bak, a dental technician who was coopted as an agent by the Gestapo-man Tindens for whom Bak used to do dental work.

Al three enjoyed a privilege of which we were deprived - they could leave the camp and move around the city.

Some others had the right to leave the camp, since they worked for Germans in the city: one Geller, a native of Galitzia, and the young daughter of Galerkin, the former owner of the Caucasian mill who now worked as a smith in the camp. They both, while living in the Wilno ghetto, had worked at the administration of the Labor Organization TODT. At the time of the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto the chief of the TODT organization, by that time a high

official of the Gestapo, placed them in our camp. He arranged for Geller, who spoke German and Polish, to be the translator to the official in charge of Jewish affairs in the Gestapo of Wilno (Shroder?) and Galerkin to be the cleaner of his private apartment.
We knew from Geller, (an acquaintance of our roommate, Aleksandra G. Zaks), who would drop in to our room, about what was going on at the Gestapo. From him we later learned about the circumstances under which perished the brother of my brother-in-law Yermasha, the engineer Moses (Mosya) Cholem.

In the beginning, when there was no regular accounting of those living in the camp, it was rather easy to get out of the camp by mixing in with the Gentiles who had access to the receiving station.
The terrible difficulties would begin for the fugitives on the "aryan side", since, because of the hostility of the gentile population, they ran a great risk of being caught and ending their lives on Ponary.
There were also those few, however (among them those who would become our very dear friends, Alexander and Emilia Sedlis) who, taking advantage of the chance to sneak out, survived by previously having prepared a trustworthy haven on the "aryan side". It was Emilia (Mila) Sedlis who, while living in our camp, had received through a Polish railroadman a letter from her mother, Genia Zeldowicz, who during the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto was sent to work in the camp Kaiserwald near Riga.
This possibility of sneaking out of the camp disappeared, however, in connection with an event which reminded us again that we were living under a Damocles's Sword and that our lives were in the hands of our implacable, merciless enemies. I do not remember the exact date, but it happened before the advent of frosts which usually come in November.
After all the workers had been mustered out on the yard where the Jewish police had previously (upon the command of the Germans) built a gallows, the gate suddenly opened and three Gestapo-men, led by Bruno Kittel the liquidator of the ghetto, drove in in an open car.
They brought with them two fugitives from our camp they had caught - a woman who belonged to a family of society's dregs nicknamed "Pozhar" (Fire) and her fictitious husband whom I had known as an employee of the stationary store of Zhabinski on Niemiecka street.
The deathly silence which began to reign as the Gestapo-men moved towards the gallows with the condemned was broken by the piercing cry of "mama!" which suddenly sounded from a window on the upper floor of one of the buildings in which we saw a child's head.
Before the passing of even one minute a little girl, maybe eight or ten years old, ran out from the building and rushed with a joyous cry "mama" to embrace her mother (Pozhar).
We witnessed here a horrible, heartrending scene - the joy of the child who thought that she had found the mother she was longing for, and the distorted by suffering face of the mother who was passionately embracing her child, knowing that she was walking to her death. When the whole group arrived at the place of execution, Kittel motioned with his hand for Grisha Shneider, the camp's blacksmith, (the brother of Alexander Shneider, a violinist famous in the United States), to step forward from our lines and ordered him to be the executioner. However, when the man (whom they were hanging first) fell twice when the noose tore, Kittel ordered him to kneel down and killed him by a shot in the back of his head. Afterwards, while he was killing the woman one of the other Gestapo-men killed the child.
The Gestapo was not satisfied with this, however. Having decided to shoot 36 women as a punishment, to forestall any more flights from the camp, next

morning, after the men had gone to work, the Gestapo ordered the Jewish police to chase all the women and children out of the rooms onto the huge yard adjacent to the buildings.

Perella remembers: When the policeman Miganz, a man my parents knew, chased us down onto the yard, we were immediately surrounded by rifle-wielding Lithuanian police. Kittel mustered us out into rows and stood before us with his arms crossed. My mother and I were in the first row, Kittel was standing just in front of us. He was very handsome, like a film actor. I will never forget his standing before us, regarding us for a very long time - I had nightmares long afterward imagining huge, flashing, fluorescent green eyes staring at me. Then Kittel smiled and, I guess on a sign from him, the Lithuanian police started to club us, herding us around the side of the building, toward where they were grabbing and dragging women into the black van standing in between the two buildings. My mother said: "Lets go, why be beaten up before we die?" But I wanted to live so passionately, I was looking at the tiny barred basement windows and wishing I could squeeze through them. I pulled my mother away from the side from which they were dragging women to the black van, at the risk of being clubbed. My mother was anxiously repeating: "I have the golden cigarette case on me, dad will have nothing to live on after they take us!"
Then, suddenly, my father broke through to us through the clubbing Lithuanians. The only man that came to stand with his family...
When it was over (they had filled their quota of victims), and we could leave the yard, we ran like arrows to the upper floor of the building - the ecstasy of being able to do this simple thing was indescribable! Through the high window we looked down on the yard - the black van was still there, we saw a frenzied man in a paroxysm next to it, vainly begging the Germans to let his wife out.
End of Perella's recollection.

When I happened to walk out of the workshop I saw the following picture: In the yard stood a huge blck van with our German driver Beck at the wheel. On the lot behind the building were hemmed in a few hundred women and children, my wife and daughter among them, whom the Lithuanian police was dragging to the black van and pushing them in.
When without hesitation I rushed to my wife and daughter, a Lithuanian policeman grabbed me and started to drag me towards the black van. I broke away from him and ran towards my family. By the time I had run onto the yard the Lithuanians stopped the "aktzye", having taken the appointed number of victims.
Immediately afterward the black van left the camp without any guards, with just Beck as driver. We learned afterwards that on the way to Ponary the condemned succeeded in opening the door which was located in the back of the van and, disregarding the consequences, started to jump out of the van. The consequences were quite serious for some, since Beck was driving very fast and they broke their legs jumping out of the speeding vehicle. Some of the women (from whom we learned all this) did manage to come back to the camp. My family survived because of the energy and courage of my daughter who, even though the Lithuanians were herding them forward threatening them with rifle-butt blows, continued to move back, pulling her mother back with her - after Ida had begun to give up and accept her fate.

These events emphasized the desperation of our situation, they confirmed once again the validity of the hateful yell of a Pole who taunted us as we were marching to work from the ghetto: "you are just living corpses!"

My daughter began ever more often to ask me, when I would come from work: "What percent chances do we have to survive? I want so much to live!" she would add. I remember that, in my evaluation of our chances for survival requested by her, (which were getting worse since the Germans were intensifying the extermination of the Jews, their defeats on the fronts notwithstanding), I never went below 70%.

The chief of H.K.P. 562, Major Plagge, came to encourage us after these events. Obviously embarassed about the latest "achievements of his fellow Germans", he told us, among other things: "Regrettably, the war has destroyed moral values as well as the material ones".

The following fact was characteristic of our state of mind: The Germans brought to our camp a man named Fikher, (a former chief of the Polish revenue department) after they had spied out that he was a converted Jew. When Fikher, by then an inmate of our camp, was able to see his Gentile wife in the reception-building, they both could not stop sobbing. I remember that both the Jewish girl who worked in "reception", and I who witnessed this scene accidentally, were deeply astonished. People did not cry in the camp, not so much because they knew that tears did not help - we just had no more tears.

Inspections were instituted in the camp following the events described by me, we had the "Apell" early every Monday morning.

Bruno Kittel soon visited our camp again. This time it was because of the intense efforts of the Gestapo to locate their former agent, Salek Desler, who, as mentioned by me before, went into hiding with his wife Rega, a native of Lodz, a couple of days before the liquidation of the Wilno ghetto. Pursuing a wrong tip, Kittel tried to learn the location of Desler's "meline" from Petya Sakin, an inmate of our camp, by putting a noose around his neck.

The Gestapo had more luck when they put the question of where Desler's hiding place was to Altaszewski, another inmate of our camp.

Altaszewski, before the war the editor of the Polish language Lodz newspaper "Republic" owned by the company "I.K.Poznanski", the largest cotton fabric manufacturer in Lodz, was a friend of Rega Desler. Running away from the Germans in 1939 he came to Wilno with Rega and his boss, Poznanski and was taken to the ghetto with his wife in 1941.

Giving in to the Gestapo's threats, Altaszewski pointed out Alpern, a policeman in our camp. Working in the ghetto police, Alpern had helped his chief, Desler, arrange a "meline" at the bottom of Subocz street where the Alperns had owned a bakery since the times of the czar. Thus the Gestapo arrested Desler, his wife and a whole group of people, (workers of the Judenrat) with whom Desler shared his "meline".

According to information which we were given by some Jewish manual workers of the Gestapo who were often sent to our camp, the Deslers were kept locked up by the Gestapo on Rossa till the late spring, when they were shot.

Rega Desler had supposedly shared her husband's fate voluntarily since previously the Gestapo chief Neugebaur had acknowledged her a Gentile.

I would like to mention here the fate of the Poznanskis, owners of the largest textile mill in Poland, who also found themselves in Wilno. "Marilek" Poznanski, renowned in Lodz as a lady's man, fell victim to the "Khapuny" during the summer of 1941. His wife, Emilya Stefanya, a lady of noble appearance, lived in the ghetto as the fictitious wife of one Jacobson, also a native of Lodz. Possessing no means of sustenance in the ghetto, E. S. Poznanska was giving lessons of many European languages and thus, during the period of "stabilization", gave English lessons to our daughter Perella. We learned from Emilya Stefanya that she was the daughter of the baron Landau, the German

Jewish banker who founded, in cooperation with the engineer Emil Ratenau, the electrotechnic concern A.E.G. As a young girl she had been presented at the Imperial Hohenzollern court. Emilya Stefanya Poznanska perished at the liquidation of the ghetto.

The winter of 1943-1944 was relatively quiet, we had no more visits from the Gestapo officials. Our humane treatment by major Plagge influenced his subordinates. We worked long hours but not very hard.
The husband of my niece, Lolek, who worked at a lathe bench, even managed to turn out metallic cigarette lighters which, (being able to communicate with the outside world through the "Reception" building) he sold to Gentile traders. Beginning to earn well Lolek declined any more of my help. At this time Lolek took another step fraught with great consequences - he bought a gun and joined a fighting organization created in our camp.

Before the coming of the frosts our camp was visited by Segelson, the manager of labor distribution of the Kowno ghetto who was searching for qualified Jewish workers. In contrast to what happened in Wilno, the life was more peaceful in the Kowno ghetto, headed by Doctor Elkhonon Elkes. The Germans had undertaken no bloody "aktzyes" in the Kowno ghetto during the two and a half years following the November of 1941. To the honor of the Kowno Jewish police, which was headed by a man named Kopelman, one should mention that they did not cover themselves with shame as did the Jewish police of Wilno who, executing the orders of Gens and Desler had sent their brethern to their deaths. We learned subseqently that during the so-called "children's aktzye", carried out simultaneously in all of Lithuania, 36 of Jewish policemen were shot in Kowno when one by one they had refused to reveal the "meline" where Jewish children were hidden.
Tempted by more peaceful conditions, a few families living in our camp (among them Arik Malkiel and wife and Rabinovitch with wife and daughter) went to the Kowno ghetto with Segalson. Segalson brought for us a letter from my brother-in-law, Dr. Lova Gerstein who lived in the Kowno ghetto with his wife and his daughter Perella. In this letter Lova who after my father-in-law's death was nobly carrying out the duties of the head of the family, asked me to be helpful to Mula - something I was doing long before my receipt of the letter.
As it did in the ghetto, all kinds of foodstuffs continued to penetrate into the camp. To the end of our stay the question of nutrition depended on the financial means. We got the money by selling our clothes, linen and underwear - valuable at that time because of the previously mentioned scarcity - everything would always find a buyer.
This was contributed to by the fact that, during the complete economic stagnation, trading with the Jews and with their stuff was, for a large part of the Gentile city population, their main, if not the only means of sustenance.

Isolated though we were, we still were up to date on the events going on in the world. Some things we learned by reading "between the lines" of the official German newspaper "Das Reich", which Geller bought systematically for Alexandra Zaks. But our main source of information was the English radio station, the B.B.C the broadcast of which we heard daily on the receiver which the radio technician Korolchuk made up from parts and which he kept in a hiding place in the workshop.
A more difficult problem, especially crucial for our daughter who since early childhood had been a passionate reader, was the question of getting books. She partially solved this problem by exchanging books with other inmates who had brought some books from the ghetto like she did.

Perella remembers: Books were the only window onto the world available to me and I craved them avidly. One of the books I had obtained was an English copy of "Gone with the wind". I knew very little English but read it nevertheless with the help of a dictionary which missed the pages beginning with the letter "A". I even started to copy the dictionary. The amazing thing was that I was so transported into the world of the "Gone with the wind", that I, the inmate of a concentration camp, cried bitterly about the sorrows of Rhett Butler.

At this time our room-mate, Alexandra G. Zaks sustained a myocardial infaction, it was subsequently frought with tragic consequences for her. Bedbound for many weeks, and in need of painstaking care, she hired the registered nurse, Niura Koniurska.

The news we gleaned about the events in the surrounding world foreshadowed the inevitable defeat of Germany and with it the certainty of the Germans having to pay for their monstruous crimes. The news also told us, however, that the Nazi policy of general extermination of the European Jewry continued to be carried out as mercilessly as before, enveloping ever more countries, (Southern France and Hungary). Thus, the relatively bearable conditions of life in our camp notwithstanding, for us the winter of 1943/1944 was full of tension and deep anxiety about what tomorrow would bring. The coming events proved our fears as being very well-founded.

The superiority of the German arms on the Eastern front was broken conlusively near Kursk in July of 1943. The success of the Russian mlitary operations was especially great in the south, where they were able to liberate the Don Basin as well as the Ukraine and approach the river Dniepr before the coming of winter. In the north the Germans were made to lift the siege of Leningrad at the end of January 1944.

On the western front, where the assault of the Allies had been blocked for many months on the approaches to Rome, near Monte Cassino, the winter was spent on preparations for the Allied landing in the north of France. The Germans were able to bring Benito Mussolini back to power in northern Italy when, in a brilliant operation which astonished the world by its gallantry and precision, Skorzenny, leading a brigade of paratroopers, managed to free Mussolini from prison.

We in our camp on the other hand after a relatively quiet winter were thrown into a streak of bloody events which ended tragicaly for the vast majority of us.

On Sunday, March 26th the Jewish administration of the camp, with no premonition that we were on the eve of horrible events, arranged a performance in celebration of the Jewish feast of "Purim" in which the performers were all children. In the performed by the children skits and songs, the "laughter through bitter tears" mirrorred our joyless reality.

Perella remembers: Two orphaned, merry, and street-wise twins, Zawke and Leibke (general favorites in the camp) did a funny song and dance with many allusions to our situation. I remember a line from one of their songs: They call me Zawke, I'm known to every one of you - and if you insist, Leibke is coming too. We can do everything, we sing and dance on the stage - we can also curse the "other" but we can't make the malediction come true.

In a skit, a modified "Hensel and Gretl", two children were seized by an evil but stupid monster (very German-looking), who was going to devour them. They were assuring him that they both tasted horrible. The monster told one of the children to taste the other by licking him. The child exclaimed: "Oh, he

tastes terrible, he is more bitter than bile!" When the monster made the first child taste the other the answer was: "Oh, he tastes more bitter than that which is more bitter than bile!" I think there was a happy ending...
I remember that in the first row of the audience sat both of our Schirmeisters who applauded the children enthusiastically - Yiddish was understandable to them to a great extent. One of the acting children was especially talented, vivacious and charming - it was the young daughter of Borys Beniakonski. We all went to sleep not suspecting the bloody surprise the Gestapo was going to hand us on the next day.

On March 27th, 1944, in the early morning, after the men had left for their work places the gates of the camp were opened suddenly and into the yard of our camp drove in trucks carrying a large contingent of officials of the Gestapo and of the Lithuanian police, led by Martin Weiss, an executioner the hands of whom were already crimson with the blood of many tens of thousands of the inmates of the Wilno ghetto.
The new arrivals scattered swiftly over the dwellings from which they began dragging out children and teenagers up to the age of fifteen, as well as even those few elderly who managed to get to our camp. The captured they took to the trucks into which they pushed thir prey. Heartrending scenes took place in our camp when the sobbing children vainly looked to their parents for protection. Mrs Zhukowski, the mother of the boy whom Kittel, amazed by his beauty, sent with his mother to our camp from Ponary, was killed by Martin Weiss with a shot from his revolver, after Mrs Zhukowski had called him "murderer". I saw with my own eyes the Lithuanians wrenching by brute force from the arms of Beniakonski his talented daughter. She had enchanted us just the day before. In some cases the mothers, not wanting to abandon their children in this terrible moment, shared their children's fate voluntarily. The fate of the seized children was more than terrible. As I learned after the cessation of hostilities during my stay in Italy from some Jews who had serviced the crematoriums in the "Vernichtung Lager" (extermination camp), since the "Gas chambers" could not keep up with their task, the transports with the children were sent straight to the ovens. Our daughter avoided this horrible fate by hiding in a "maline" which our neighbour, attorney Zmigrod bagan building in the cellar and which she found a few days before.

Perella remembers: Some days previously I was sitting on the seat of our carry-out toilet in the cubbyhole under the stairs when I noticed an opening in the floor. A few hours later there was no trace of the opening - that was suggestive, I remembered it. When we heard that the camp was surrounded I went to check my "hole" and found Zmigrod going down through it into the cellar. I ran to get my mother and we went into the cellar with Zmigrod - one can never deny entrance into a hiding place, the one left out could tell the executiners about it.

Gerus (Gershon), the eight year old son of my brother-in-law Mula ran away from the Lithuanians who grabbed him and were taking him down the staircase from their second-floor room; he saved himself by sliding down the banisters and racing to his father's workplace where Mula managed to hide him.

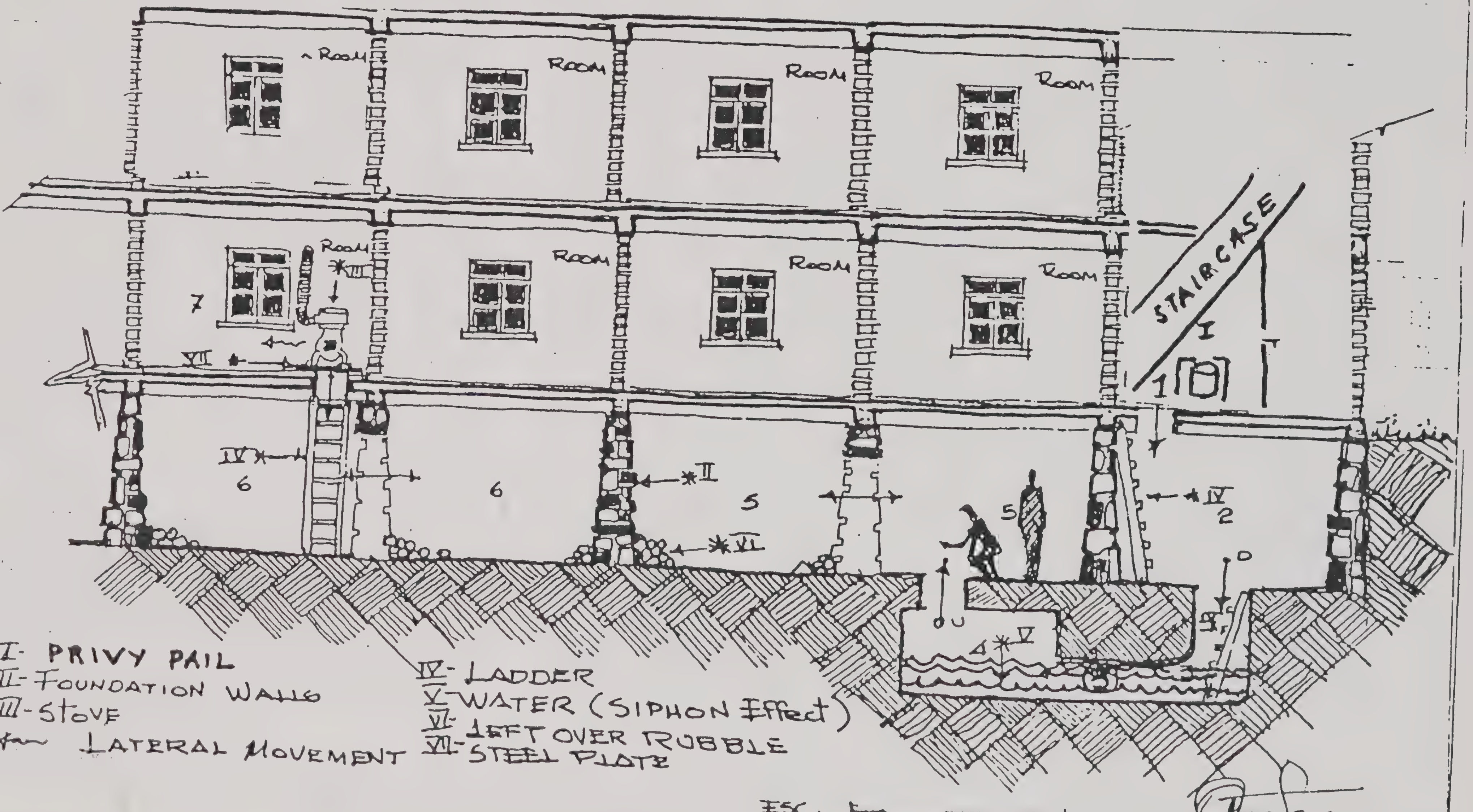
Simultaneously with ours, "children's aktzyes" were perpetrated by the Germans in all the Jewish camps in Lithuania, including the "Kailis" and the Kowno ghetto. (The latter existed almost a year longer than the Wilno ghetto, it was liquidated in August of 1944 as the Russians were coming near).

PRIVY IN
CUBBY-HOLE UNDER STAIRCASE
1-ENTRANCE TO "MALINE N°1"
2-FIRST FOUNDATION SPACE
3-TUNNEL
4-ORIGINAL N°1 "MALINE"
5-ENLARGED "N°1 MALINE"
6-MALINE N°2 (UNKNOWN TO US)
7-ENTRANCE TO "MALINE N°2"

TRANSVERSAL CUT OF "MALINES N°1 & N°2"

HKP 1944.

Prepared by architect GARY GERSTEIN of Mexico City before his untimely death in 1992. Gary hid in this MALINE as a child of eight. Some inexpert, but needed corrections of entrance made by Perella


Room
Room
Room
Room
Room
Room
Room
Room
STAIRCASE
I
1
7
VII
III
IV
6
6
II
5
VI
5
IV
2
V
ESC.
0 0.50

I- PRIVY PAIL
II- FOUNDATION WALLS
III- STOVE
⟵ LATERAL MOVEMENT
IV- LADDER
V- WATER (SIPHON Effect)
VI- LEFT OVER RUBBLE
VII- STEEL PLATE

The "children's aktzye" shook the camp to its very foundations. The air was filled with moans of the disconsolate mothers, people moved around the camp like shadows. Running into Borys Beniakonski who had lost his daughter as I recounted, I couldn't hold back a whisper: "how could one let go of such a daughter?" "Are we human", answered me Beniakonski, "we are worms, you hear, we are nothing but crushed worms!"

These words of Beniakonski characterized aptly our emotional state at that time.

The three-year-long torture by fear, continuous chain of disasters and our enemies' merciless and boundless cruelty on one hand, the complete futility of resistance on the other, exhausted our spiritual forces.

The majority of us were left with the common to the most primitive beings instinct of self preservation only.

The realization that we were doomed and that the point of tragic resolution was getting near did not weaken this desire to live - if anything it rather strenghened it.

If at the beginning of the Hitlerian occupation there had been some individual cases of suicide (Michael and Esfira Taub), these ceased completely when we entered the period of systematic mass extermination.

As described by me before, these times bared the peoples souls.

In many cases mothers would sacrifice their lives to save their children or ease the children's last moments. But there were also some cases when the thirst for life made the mothers sacrifice their children to save themselves.

Even as far as the response to the loss of their children in the "children Aktzye" was concerned, there was a multiplicity of reactions.

Some mothers confined themselves to inconsolable grief, but there were quite a few others in whom their grief drove them to hatred of the surviving children. We took Gary, my wife's nephew to stay in our room to preserve him from fits of hatred of Gurvich, a woman who shared their room and who had lost her child.

Fearing a repetition of the aktzye against children, for some time we lived on guard, ready at any minute to hide the children in the newly discovered maline. As an "illegal", Perella did not go to the weekly Monday morning inspections (Apels)

At the end of April, 1944 we heard from Geller who, as mentioned previously, lived in our camp while working as a translator for the Gestapo of Wilno, that my brother-in-law Yermasha's brother Moses (Mosya) Cholem was incarcerated in the cellars of the Gestapo.

Since in the early fifties Shakses, a contributor to the New York newspaper Forverts, presented to its Jewish readers a distorted history of the family Cholem (gleaned from the words of Mosya's former wife), I feel in all fairness that I should record the true story and describe at the same time the rather unusual circumstances of Mosya's death.

The commercial hardware house of the Brothers Cholem, the largest trading enterprise in Wilno belonged between the two World Wars to the heirs of Saul, one of the original "brothers". They were : the owner in charge Yeremey (Yermasha), the engineer Moses (Mosya), Emmanuel, a medical doctor and Tatyana, married to Kaplan-Kaplanski. The crisis that the business underwent in the early 1930ies notwithstanding it managed, through the endeavors of Yeremey, to retain the representation and right of exclusive sale in the Wilno area of the Syndicate of the Polish Steel Mills. The eldest brother Mosya, an engineer-architect by education, became a diamond dealer after settling in Berlin. In Berlin Mosya married Dolly, a very beautiful daughter of a wealthy Gentile family. After going bankrupt in a big way in the diamond trading business, Mosya returned to Wilno in 1923 with his wife Dolly, son Wolf and daughter Lilly. In Wilno, working in his profession he began the construction of small residential houses (villas).

Even though Mosya recived monthly 1200 zloty just from the Cholem family business, (a sum fully sufficient for well-to-do living) he never paid his business (and often even his personal) debts, for reasons which remained a riddle to all those around him.

One of his victims was my father-in-law Gershon Gerstein from whom Mosya took lumber products worth about 12,000 zloty for his construction business and never paid a penny. But the constant monetary difficulties were not the reason of the breakup of Mosya's family at the beginning of the war. It was caused by the rather unusual love affair between the elderly, even though well preserved Mosya and a few tens of years younger than him, beautiful blond wife of the physician Perelman, daughter of the very wealthy Abram and Sofia Strugach, owners of a wine distllery and brewers yeast plant in Oshmiany. The breakup and later the divorce of Mosya and Dolly in the early spring of 1941 occurred in front of our bemused eyes. Mosya was a constant visitor of his sister Tatyana Kaplan Kaplanski with whom we then shared our apartment. Mosya insisted on divorce and Dolly could do nothing else but return to her parents in Berlin. As a German she took advantage of the Stalin-Hitler pact according to which all the German nationals living in the Baltic countries were entitled to going to Germany. Declaring that the Jew Mosya was not her children's father, Dolly took her son Wolf and daughter Lilly back to Germany with her.

Mosya lived in the ghetto during the time of the Hitlerian occupation and, working in his profession, was able to survive the multiple aktzyes. Having arranged shelter with the Karaim Zajonczkowski in the suburb Zwierzyniec he managed to leave the ghetto before its liquidation. Previously, after only a short stay in the ghetto, doctor Perelman succeded in settling with his wife and child on the "Aryan side", as a forester in the vicinity of Wilno. Mrs Perelman was apparently seized by the Gestapo when she came to the city to meet Mosya.

Under interrrogation she gave away both her husband and child and Mosya.

According to Geller, the Geastapo-man in charge of the Jewish affairs, Shroeder, who was well impressed by Mosya's charm and the excellent German he spoke was about to send Mosya to us in H.K.P. But after Mosya, not knowing about Shroeder's intentions and hoping to save himself through this information, declared that his son Wolf was a pilot, an officer in the German army, Shroeder had sent him to Ponary with the Perelmans. "A man ready to cause the death of his own son to save himself should not live!" Shroeder told Geller.

Perella remembers: The owners of the maline (by now that included all the neighbours living on our landing) did not want to share the secret of the maline with Gary's parents, saying that they lived away from our landing, his mother would blab out its secret to her many friends and thus we would all die. My father was adamant, however, "We don't know whether she will disclose the secret - this might cost us our lives in a few months. The child's life is in peril now, we have no right to deny Gary life now, on the chance that it could imperil our lives later". The Gersteins were accepted in the maline, they kept the secret.

Gary, an architect and the father of three children lives in Mexico City.

Feeling that the noose around our necks was getting tighter, the men living on our landing started to work feverishly at night, led by the attorney Zmigrod, preparing a hiding place, the so called maline.
The trapdoor into the basement from the cubbyhole in which the carry-out toilet was situated still recquired a lot of work.
We knew from experience that if the entrance to a maline stops beeing a strict secret, its usefulness is zero. At the critical moment a crowd craving rescue, much larger than the capacity of the maline, would dam the entrance to it.
Working diligently, we blocked off the farthest room in the basement by a brick wall and excavated an underground passage to gain access to this isolated space. For this we had to chisel a large hole through the stone foundation of the house. The shaft leading to the crawlspace we camouflaged by covering it with an earth-filled flat wooden box. We fastened wires to two sides of the box. By pulling on the wires we could raise the earth-filled box. The needed materials - cement, boards and so on, we stole from the Germans. The car battery we needed for illumination we acquired by the same means.

In May our camp administration was forced to supply the Germans with a couple-of-hundred men, supposedly for work in the locality called Kozlowa Ruda - none of them had survived.

The reports from the outer world, though unfavourable for our enemies brought nothing comforting to us either. The Allies landed in Normandy in the north of France on June 6th, 1944.
Almost simultaneously, in Italy the Allies took Rome.

The decisive role in our destinies, however, was played by the events in the central sector of the eastern front, where the Russian armies, after standing motionless all winter and spring on the river Dnieper, mounted an offensive on June 23rd 1944 and, reducing the German armies to flight, moved westward with lightning speed.
We were speedily nearing the outcome which would prove tragic for the vast majority of the camp's inmates. As early as on Saturday, July 1st, 1944 we were warned by Major Plagge, the head of the H.K.P. 562, that our camp would be evacuated westward in connection with the nearing of the Russians. To emphasize his warning major Plagge informed us in his speech that we would stop beeing a H.K.P. work camp and would be entirely in the hands of the S.S. This speech of Major Plagge aroused terrible fear in us. According to the British Radio station BBC, before retreating the Germans had shot without mercy all the Jewish inmates of the camps.
Thus having no illusion about the intentions of our executioners, the vast majority of us understood that for our camp the moment has come which we all feared and for which the dwellers of our landing had made feverish preparations. At dusk a few tens of men, mostly young ones, ran away from the camp jumping out of the window of the blacksmith shop which was facing the outside world.

Even though the day of Monday, July 3rd was marked for our "evacuation", we decided to begin descending into the maline without delay, especially since we had to do so very carefully so as not to give away the secret of the meline to "outsiders". The vast majority of the inmates of the camp had no prepared hiding places and hearing about the looming "Evacuation" they were rushing around the camp looking for any imaginable way of rescue. This posed a mortal danger to our hiding place. This question became even more acute when a group of young men who heard some rumours about the attorney Zmigrod having a meline started to watch and follow him. When Zmigrod, trying to put them off course continued to walk aimlessly around, they gave him a bestial beating, demanding that he point out the entrance to our melineh. So as not to be torn to pieces, Zmigrod had to give in and the number of people in our maline more than trebled as a result. Even though this did not cause the "downfall of the maline", as it happened to the meline of my wife's relatives, the Shapiros, with fatal for them consequences, this circumstance had serious conseqences for us as well, as we will see.

The dwellers of our landing, Eva and Lolek among them, as well as the family of my wife's brother, descended to the cellar through the camouflaged hole in the asphalt floor of the cubbyhole under the stairs. We were soon joined by a few tens of those who had broken in after wrenching the information from Zmigrod.

Perella remembers: A little later, when we lifted the box filled with earth, we saw that the crawl space connecting the cellar with the bricked off real meline was filled almost completely with water.

Disconsolate we thought that we were deprived of access to the main meline - but, not willing to accept this, first another woman, then I dove in and crawled through, with everybody else following us. My mother and I did not realize that my father did not crawl all the way through, unable or unwilling to negotiate the hole in the crawlspace any further.

My niece Eva and her husband did not follow us - upon Lolek's insistance they both left the basement. As I had mentioned before, Lolek had joined a combat organization of young people in the camp who intended to offer the Germans armed resistance - he had acquired a gun for this purpose. We never saw them again, they had both perished, but I was unable to learn the circumstances of their deaths.

Moving forward in the crawl space we came to the stone foundation of the house. Before squeezing through the chiselled hole we stopped in a large niche for a few hours. Lying flat in the niche we suffered for the first time difficulties with breathing because of the lack of fresh air. Pretty soon the woman who was sharing our room, Alexandra Grigorievna Zaks, (not quite well after her infarct) groaned that she was suffocating and would have to give up the thought of hiding in the maline. After my wife, daughter and Rosa Milecka, the other woman who shared our room, had crawled through the hole in the foundation, I helped Alexandra Zaks to get out of the crawl space and return to our room. My cousin Nina (Sheniuk) with her husband, Kuba Rotstein followed Alexandra's example with fatal consequences. Another of our neighbours who had left the maline to their doom was Yocheved (Shadovska), whom we had saved by inscribing her as our daughter during the second inspection of the "yellow life certificates aktzye" in 1941. She left upon the insistance of her husband, Simon Alberg, the son of former multimillioners from Memel.

Coming back to our room we found strangers there. On Rosa Milecka's bed sat the wife of the Gestapo agent Averbuch who had been shot by the Germans some time before. In her "deathbed" confession she was trying to exculpate him, explaining that her husband became an agent of the Gestapo because "we were young and we wanted to live".

It was past midnight from Sunday to Monday - the evil day marked for our "evacuation" by the Germans, when I joined my wife and daughter who were already in our maline. But I did not get into the maline through the crawl space. I can't remember from whom I had learned that the workers of the "cooparative" (food distribution point) situated on the floor below our rooms were also preparing a maline. They had blocked off with a brick wall a basement room adjacent to our maline and could go down into it through an opening in the floor. They camouflaged it by putting over it a big, moveable tile oven, built on concealed wheels. This group had delayed until the night of July 3rd their decision to go down to their maline. Learning from them that they intended to unite the adjacent malines by taking apart the dividing brick wall I joined them - thus I did not have to crawl through that small hole in the waterfilled crawlspace. I carried a "rucksack" with some changes of underwear and a brush to clean myself off with after lying in the mud; I remember that I had also put into the bag a "tales", a ceremonial shawl worn when praying and in which, according to the Jewish tradition one buries the dead. The manager of the cooperative, Lusik Wilkomir and his stepson Taub succeeded in breaking out of the camp by jumping out of the window of the smithy, but his wife and daughter-in-law (Lizke, born Persikowicz) descended into the maline with me. When, working with pickaxes we took apart the brick wall dividing the two malines, we created a larger space which possessed two exits - that was very important, if the Germans were to discover the entrance to one maline we might be able to save ourselves by fleeing through the other.

A small electrical bulb connected to a stolen car-battery barely illuminated the space where about one hundred of us lied down on the bare ground.

With the coming of morning, i.e. of the moment when the Germans would discover that a few hundred people did not appear at the inspection, our tension was getting speedily worse.

I remeber that, fearing that the Germans would blow up the building, we began to thrust ourselves against the outside walls assuming that this would give us a better chance to survive.

Added to the fears of discovery by the Germans or that we would perish under the ruins of the building came a sudden excruciating physical suffering. We had not appreciated the importance of and thus did not arrange for sufficient ventilation; to this was added the unforeseen crowding, thus our hiding place was rapidly becoming ever more stifling.

Being faced with unavoidable death by suffocation, our leaders, Zmigrod and Mintz (one of the newcomers) broke through with pickaxes some tiny openings in the outside walls (risking that this would bring us to the attention of our enemies).

The scanty trickle of air thus generated saved us from suffocation but was insufficient to protect us from the effects of severe oxygen deficiency of the air we breathed (a candle could not burn).

To our misfortune, this severe oxygen deprivation together with the terrifying psychological burden we were subjected to evoked (as we had later learned) the many cases of insanity. As a result truly infernal scenes (worthy of the pen of a Dante) had been enacted among the Jews suffering in the maline.

As I now remember, feeling that I might find more oxygen in the layer of air near to the ground I was stetched out breathing heavily with my face to the ground when the strained silence in our shelter was interrupted by a piercing scream of a male voice repeating:

"But why, why do you want to slaughter me?" seconded by a woman crying: "Such a brilliant future would await our children, after all"

The screams were emitted by a couple named Gutman who had forcibly pushed themselves into our meline with their two girls. I knew Gutman from the times before the war. As the owner of a bicycle repair workshop he would buy tires and other rubber bicycle products from me; he was known as a hard working and honest craftsman. Hearing these screams I rushed to the Gutmans. Imploring them not to cause the deaths of all of us with their screams and assuring them that none of us intended to kill them, I succeeded in quieting down the Gutmans. "Yes, Mr. Esterowicz, you are a decent man, you will not slaughter me."

Gutman tried to shake off the nightmare persecuting him and tried to let himself be talked out of it, only to resume his piercing screams a little while later.

This scene was repeated several times, but each time I was able to quiet Gutman down. But then one event brought on a series of tragic happenings. Our leader Zmigrod declared that since we needed to conserve the energy in our battery (after all we did not know how long we would have to hide), he decided to turn off the light. Nobody objected to this decision and wanting to be near Gutman to be able to quiet him if needed, I sat down next to him on his left. On the right side of Gutman sat a man named Malkes dressed in his heavy winter coat. Unexpectedly, soon after our shelter was plunged into darkness there came sudden desperate calls for help. When the light was put on the following picture stood before our eyes: Gutman was standing up, wild-eyed with a bloody pocketknife in his hand, on the ground before him lay Malkes, saved from death by his winter coat but bleeding from the numerous wounds inflicted on him by Gutman. Gutman's reaction to darkness soon brought on angry exclamations from Zmigrod: "This is our blood" pointing his finger at the battery he addressed the Gutmans, "and we want to live, do you hear, we want to live!" he repeated furiously. This was followed by events which shook us to our depths. After a short consultation the bunch of youths killed the Gutmans, braining them with some bricks which lay on the ground nearby.

This did not end the horror: with every passing moment I was more persuaded that my wife was also halucinating. Her speech was becoming ever more irrational and pointless. I remember that my despair related to my wife's mental aberrations was deepened by the realization that if she should start to scream her life would be endangered not only by the Germans. As the following events had demonstrated, my fears were well founded - in such an eventuality the bunch of youths would not hesitate in killing my wife either.

The events in our maline had demonstrated that when people are caught in the situation of hunted animals, their lust for life (sharpened in such cases) frequently converts them into merciless killers.
Two young girls, the sisters Arluk were hiding in our meline. I knew their father well, he was the owner of a store of electrical appliances before the war. One of the girls our leaders strangled before our eyes when she began to show signs of violent insanity. I remember that I did not give up at this terrible for us moment, made even more terrifying by my wife's mental state. Not understanding the cause of her state I took her onto my lap and with my whole heart tried to inspire her to the "last effort". "Idochka, darling, this is our last battle, the last obstacle we have to overcome - we have to, do you hear me, we have to overcome to survive!" I kept whispering to her thinking that she had temporarily broken down emotionally because of the horrifying scenes she witnessed.
But to our despair, both mine and our daughter's, who kept asking me: "Tatus (Daddy) is this for always?" my wife did not regain her senses and continued her demented babble, providentially in a gentle and quiet voice which did not invite attention to her.

Perella remembers: Mama was stroking the face of the raven haired Lizka Persikowicz repeating "what a beautiful baby, what a beautiful blond baby, so blond and darling". This must have been July 4th, or maybe July 5th, 1944; we were told much later that my cousin Dora's son Gary was born on that day in Russia; moreover, Anne and Michael, our twins, would be born on July 5th, 1957, exactly 13 years later... I remember that my mother fell asleep with her head in my lap. Since I seemed to have had a rock lodged under my spine the position was very uncomfortable but I couldn't move because if woken up my mother could have called attention to hersef with her delirium.

In the meantime in the camp (as we were told later) there appeared on Monday a special German military detachment wearing black uniforms and with skull head insignia on their caps. They sent all the inmates who came to the inspection to be shot in Ponary - nobody had survived.
Discovering that a large percentage of inmates did not appear at the inspection, the Germans started a search of both buildings and those discovered there, (numbering about 200) were shot immediately in the yard. The Germans mobilized the surrounding gentile population for burial of the corpses, after which they lifted the guard and abandoned the camp on Tuesday, July 4th.
Simultaneously, the Germans liquidated in the same way the Jews of the camp "Kailis" and the group of Jews, headed by doctor Margolis, who were working in the military hospital on Antokol. They were all shot in Ponary. The Jewish manual workers servicing the Gestapo, headed by Kamenmacher, were sent to Kowno where they were all shot on the 9th Fort.

Through the mercy of destiny we were not discovered by the Germans and, cut off from the world we continued our torment in our maline. I remember that we suffered from thirst most terribly and to assuage it we were forced to drink the sewer water which we filtered by covering the neck of a bottle with a handkerchief. On Tuesday evening the scouts sent out through the crawlplace came back with the news that the Germans had lifted the guard and left our camp.
After the news we decided without hesitation to break out from the maline with its inhuman conditions and nightmarish experiences and brave the dangers on the aryan side. When those sent out with clippers to cut the barbed wire of the fence facing Rossa came back after accomplishing their task and confirmed that the Germans had left the camp, we started to climb out one by one after pushing aside the oven in the "cooperative". Having on our hands my wife in a semi-conscious condition, the climbing out of the meline was not an easy task for myself, my daughter and Mula and his family. But even before more than half of us could climb out the last ones out came back hurridly saying that the Germans had come back. We had to hastily put the oven back and sink back into the torturing uncertainty to which now was added the feeling of hopelessness. I remember that in this unenviable condition I had to undergo another unneccessary experiance. In the meline with us was our leader Zmigrod's brother-in-law Swirski with his wife and child. The Swirskis did not have time to follow Zmigrod who was one of the first to leave the meline. Having been left alone and seeing in me a man who knew all the ins and outs of the meline, Swirski and his wife, feeling perplexed and perhaps not quite sane grabbed me from both sides screaming "where you go, we go!" My implorations to let me go, that we were all in the same situation, made no impression on the Swirskis. I managed to free myself from their convulsive embrace only after I started wildly beating Swirski over the the head with my fists.
I recall that even though the departure of a part of the concealed, led by our leader, worsened our emotional status, this circumstance had also a positive side to it. The reduction of the number of people hiding in the maline permitted the air we breathed to improve a little - this immediately bettered my wife's condition, her reasoning was slowly coming back.

In the meantime the following was happening: learning that the Germans have left, crowds of Gentiles inundated the camp to grab the belongings of the killed Jews. We had brought clothing, linen, dishes, pots and pans, pillows and so on from the ghetto, it all was left in the habitations - immediately all was appropriated by the mob. But the looters were not satisfied with this - after all Jews were famed for their "riches", their gold and jewelry. Thus searching for the Jew's hidden riches the looters started to rip up the floors and everything else they suspected could hold anything. It was Wednesday evening when by moving the oven in the "cooperative" they discovered the entrance to our meline. Apparently those who had left the meline the day before did not replace the oven quite well. The stream of light coming suddenly from the ceiling, blinding to darkness accustomed eyes made us fear that the worst had happened - the Germans had discovered the entrance to our hiding place. The fact that the order to get out was made in Polish rather than German was rather unexpected. Exhausted physically as well as psychically, we decided to submit to fate - even more so when we soon realized that we were discovered not by Germans but by a band of Poles.

But when, intending to climb out we moved toward the improvised wooden ladder our way was barred by the sister of the killed girl Arluk.

Threatening us with bricks and drenched with tears she met us with hysterical cries: "I won't let you out, you, killers of my sister!"

After all our attempts to sooth the poor girl were unsuccessful, Nina (Mula's wife) climbed bravely up to the unfortunate girl, threw a blanket over her and held her until we could all climb out.

We had to pay off the Poles who awaited us. For my part I gave them a gold pocket watch, the wedding present of my father-in-law. Learning from the Poles that the Germans and their flunkies had left the camp, we decided to leave it too. Fearing that on the Subocz street we might be faced by our persecutors we turned toward Rossa where our camp adjoined a wood. On our way we passed the incompletely buried corpses of those whose hiding places had been discovered by the Germans and who were shot on the spot.

I want to emphasize that my wife's reason cleared completely as soon as she was out in the fresh air. However, the terrible strain we were subjected to during these last days swayed the health of both my wife and daughter as the future would show.

The camp was full of Poles but both we and Mula's family got out without bringing attention to ourselves and climbed a little hill adjoining the camp. Our problems were far from solved, however. We could not stay on the hillside since, according to the Poles living in the surrounding houses and who were standing around, the Germans who still controlled the city illuminated the meadow we were on with flood-lights at night. We had to find shelter with Gentiles in the city but to do that we needed to wash and clean our clothing from the dirt that clung to it after we spent days wallowing in the mud of the basement.

The Poles gave us some water for washing up and we cleaned our clothing with the brush which I had clutched during all these days and which was the only object carried out by me from the maline.

We decided to separate from the Gersteins fearing that our group might invoke upon us the attention of our enemies. My brother-in-law Mula with his wife and son went to Antokol, a suburb where the Gersteins were born and where they knew many Gentiles. We intended to try to go to No 2 Zawalna street where we had lived before the ghetto, to the janitor Nikolai who hid my sisters Emma and Anya with Shelinka before their departure for Woronowo.

Before we had time to move, Perella was accosted by a young Lithuanian who appeared from nowhere and suggested that she should come with him.

When Perella answered that she was with her parents he offered shelter in his apartment to the three of us. Having almost no other way out, we accepted his offer immediately. I have to admit that entrusting our lives to a complete stranger, a man belonging to a nation who more than any other showed so much eagerness and diligence in the enterprise of our extermination was foolhardy to say the least. However, destiny was merciful to us for once and we did not pay for our credulity with our lives. Nonetheless we were on the outskirts of town and had to manage to get to the Lithuanian's apartment which was situated in the center of the city. Thus we had to traverse for a long distance the streets of the city which was still completely under German control. One circumstance was favorable for us: because of the nearing of the front the streets of the city were full of the dwellers of the nearby villages who thought the stone structures of the city would be a defense against the bombs.

The apartment of the Lithuanian was situated on Zawalna street, across the street from the Jewish hospital which was included in what used to be the ghetto. It was on the second floor of a corner house which bordered on one side the intact Choral Synagogue, on the other fronted a large square from which one entered the apartment. The latter was an important favorable factor since it gave us a chance to leave and enter without beeing seen by the janitor of whom, the Lithuanian told us, we should beware.

As we came closer to our goal the Lithuanian left us among the ruins of the former ghetto and went to reconnoiter. He returned when he saw that he could take us to his apartment without being noticed. Leaving us there he went to a bomb-shelter, since the Russians were systematically subjecting the nearby railroad junction to a nightly bombing.

Thus we found ourselves alone in a strange apartment on the top floor of a house situated (as the crow flies) just a few hundred meters from the railroad station. But neither the horrible feeling of beeing defenseless among enemies, nor the ceaseless roar of the Russian bombs falling with the coming of darkness could keep us (after all that we were subjected to) from falling into a sleep of the dead. When we finally woke late on the next morning my wife told me that I had hallucinated in my sleep.

Through the windows facing the square we could see on Zawalna street (one of the main arteries of the city) a ceaseless stream of the German military and their camps interspersed with the dwellers of those villages who assisted the Germans in their fight with the partisans - the so called "Wehrdoerfer". The latter, retreating with the German army, were taking their cattle with them. They all would turn onto the Big Pohulanka street which took them to the highway going west. I should note that, according to our observation at that time (July 6th, 1944) that stage of the retreat of the German army was being accomplished in full order. The Lithuanian came to us early next morning. He warned us again that the janitor of the house should not know of our existance. Once we had a roof over our heads our next task (an urgent one since we had not eaten for a few days) was to get something to eat. With fear in our hearts we sent Perella to ask for food to Nikolai, the janitor of the house on No 2 Zawalna street and to Boleslaw Poddany, who lived nearby. There was nothing else we could do and it was easier for Perella to pass for a Gentile.

Perella remembers: The streets were full of people, there were sellers of produce - I looked at this normal life in surprise. Both Nikolai and the Poddanys were glad to hear that we were alive and gave me some food to bring to my parents. But then suddenly, as I was sitting at the Poddanys, somebody ran in warning that the Germans were grabbing people to dig trenches. I sensed that my hosts were afraid that I might be found in their house. I thanked them, bid them good-by and left, going up Zawalna toward the house of the Lithuanian. There was not a soul on the street - everybody was hiding. As I was trudging doggedly along, carrying my bags of food, I suddenly heard the loud, measured steps of the German guard. Two of them (in their characteristic helmets) were walking down Zawalna toward me on the opposite sidewalk. I realized that giving in to the instinct to run away would be fatal. I had to continue to walk slowly toward the Germans, down the empty, deathly silent street. This slow walk was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life. The German watch did not stop me and I finally knocked on the door of the house we stayed in - it seemed an eternity when my parents did not open the door immediately.

As mentioned before, during the whole day of Thursday, July 6th, 1944, the retreating German army was continuously passing in front of our windows. With the coming of darkness came the bombs with which the Russians were endeavoring to paralyze the important railroad junction nearby. But even though we were sitting upstairs next to the roof and were shuddering with every close-by explosion, we were nevertheless afraid to leave our haven and take shelter in the cellar since there we would be exposed to the rest of the population. For the time being the fate was merciful toward us, even though not for long.

We had a bad fright during the night from Thursday to Friday - the janitor, who according to the Lithuanian constituted a bad danger to us, attempted to get into our appartment. Fortunately I was able to prevent his getting in. Hearing that someone was trying to open the front door with a key, I succeeded at the last moment to lock the door with the chain. The Lithuanian who came to us Friday morning told us that as a rule the janitors robbed the unguarded dwellings of the tenants who stayed in the bomb-shelters.

Starting on Friday, since the authorities (both German as well as the Lithuanian) were forced to abandon the city in a great hurry, the civilian population started to plunder the merchandise from the warehouses as well as the food from the Lithuanian Cooperative stores which the authorities were unable to evacuate in time. From our windows we saw people dragging huge loads of merchandise, bending under the weight.

Observing what was going on, Perella decided to go out with the Lithuanian (upon his suggestion) to see what they could get. She returned with a huge round carton of jam which she had taken off the shelf of the food cooperative "Rutas", next door on Zawalna street, after entering with a crowd through a window. The jam was a very welcome addition to our scanty meals. The plunders continued through the day of Friday, July 7th, even though the German army was still in the city. Through the windows we could observe the German motorized anti-aircraft and antitank guns drive by in both directions on Zawalna street. The following events showed that the Germans, after retreating with their main forces, intended to defend Wilno with a special garrison which apparently was to be sacrificed in order to inhibit the Russian offensive .

The Russian army came close to the city during the night from Friday to Saturday and the artillery shelling began. I was standing next to a window Saturday morning when an artillery shell hit our house.

The air-pressure created by it impelled the window-frame into the room and threw me into the next room. Deafened by the explosion and diregarding our other fears we ran out into the yard where we ran into the janitor.

I survived without major wounds, with just some deep bleeding scratches from the flying glass. The janitor protested loudly when I put my bloody hands into a pail of water which he had put by. However, the sequential deafening roar of a near-by explosion forced us all to look for a bomb-shelter. Directed by the janitor, we ran to the bombshelter situated in the basement of a many-storied building at No 5 Kwiatowa lane connecting Zawalna to Sadowa street leading to the passenger railroad station. The large bomb-shelter was overfilled by people seeking defense from the bombing which was getting worse with every minute. The people were lying down on the floor on comforters, many had also brought pillows for sleeping. What was particularly useful, since we were stuck in the cellar for five days, was the food they had brought with them. We, on the other hand had no food and had to sleep on the bare ground, using an arm as pillow under our heads.

Having ended up among a crowd of Gentiles, in addition to the physical privations we were also afraid that our neighbours might learn that we were Jewish. Since the center of the town was still in German hands, this circumstance carried with it great danger to our lives, as we shall see.

To begin with everything was going smoothly. We thought that we were able to deflect the suspicions evoked by our unusual appearance, our lack of belongings and mine and my wife's less than perfect Polish. We explained that we were Russian and we had to run out of our house because of a bomb explosion. Perella's Polish was good and she became friendly with a Polish teenage girl. The surrounding people were rather friendly, they talked to us and even offered us food.

The problem of our nutrition was somewhat alleviated when we discovered that in the upper story of the house there was a storehouse with supplies of liquor and bisc uits abandoned by the Germans. The latter served as our main source of food. Personally, I drank liquor with the biscuits. The time passed with unmerciful slowness. Perella remembers that she tried to get drunk in order to while away the time. She did not like the taste and was bitterly disappointed when after drinking down a large amount of liquor she did not even get tipsy. Her dislike of alcohol and resistance to its effects dates from that time.

The ceaseless roar of the shelling which shook the walls of our shelter testfied to the fact that the Germans were stubbornly defending the city - this in its turn showed that there would be no quick surcease.

To make matters worse, Monday morning, on our third day in the shelter, the Poles had decided that we must be Jewish. We were made aware of their conclusion when an old lady suddenly asked Perella: "How was it in the ghetto?" The news about our being Jewish spread like wildfire through the shelter and evoked different reactions, from reserved coolness to expressions of outright hostility. Perella's young "friend" would have nothing to do with her when she learned that we were Jewish.

Most horrified was a religious woman who was ceaselessly praying, crossing herself and demanding that we should be handed to the Germans. She was sure that we would be the death of them all - we would be throwing bombs and the Germans would kill everybody in retaliation.

We were saved by the lady janitor of that house who promised to keep us under strict observation and suppress any attempts by us to attack the Germans. I also remember a gesture of sympathy from a Russian peasant from Smolensk named Gorokhov who, learning that we were Jewish, sent us a bowl of hot soup which he managed to cook right there in the cellar.

The stubborn fighting continued in the city without letup. We had to spend two more unbearably slow days in this atmosphere poisoned by the hostility of those around us.

The first patrol of the Red Army appeared in the yard of our bomb shelter in the morning of July 12, 1944; it consisted mostly of Kalmyks. Their coming proclaimed the end of the three years of our torment.
Thinking back I remember that having been crushed by the ceaseless flood of disasters, we were utterly drained psychologically by these years of terror as well as by our struggle to avoid our appointed destiny. Thus we were unable to react to the fact of our miraculous deliverance with the joy it deserved.

Around noon, when the shooting quieted down since the German resistance was broken, we left the shelter and walked down Zawalna toward the house in which we had lived before we were driven to the ghetto.
On the street, next to the abandoned anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns lay lots of corpses of German soldiers, some of them burned beyond recognition. In carrying out their "scorched earth" policy the Germans set fire to many houses of the city. Our house on the corner of the Zawalna and Gdanska streets escaped destruction but at the gate lay the body of Nikolai, the janitor who had been kind to us. His wife told us that he had been hit by a stray bullet.

We could hear lots of shooting from the direction of Mickiewicza, the main street where there were still some points of German resistance, many buildings on the nearby Portowa and Wilenska streets were in flames. We turned and went uphill on the hilly, not much destroyed and relatively quiet Big Pohulanka, all the way up to the military bakery.
As I recall the day was sunny and moderately hot. We walked silently, thirstily breathing the fresh air which we had been deprived of for so long. The joy of our survival was poisoned by the realization of our losses - that the earth could have suddenly yawned, sparing us and swallowing almost all of those close and dear to us.

It was twilight when we came back to the yard of our bomb-shelter.
There we almost fell victim to a Polish partisan who, learning that we were Jewish, pointed his rifle at us assuming that even under the new authorities he could kill Jews with impunity. We were saved by the Soviet soldiers who came in response to my wife's screams for help. We spent the night in the bomb-shelter where Perella was suddenly met with open arms by her Polish "friend" (the Poles were under the illusion that the Jews were well liked by the Soviets).

In the morning, looking for shelter, we went to 57 Subocz street, to the former H.K.P. camp. The outskirts in which the camp was situated had been taken by the Russians a few days prior to the taking of the center of town. There we found some of the former Jewish inmates who, homeless like we were, continued to seek shelter in the buildings of the camp which had been emptied of all their contents by the plundering Gentiles. In the room in which we used to live we found nothing of the things we had brought from the ghetto except for some of our photographs, trampled, damaged and dirtied. Perella went down, crawled into our "maline" and brought out my "rucksack" bag. We found my "tales" in it - all the underwear which I had placed in it had been stolen.

LIBERATION, July 1944

Wilno

Life in liberated Wilno under the Soviets
Stalin's antiSemitism
Tales of the partisans
Ida's illness
Perella finds a tutor, is able to rejoin highschool grade
My work in the Soviet Lithuania's Planning Ministry
The reality of life in the "classless paradise"
Arrests and deportations
My views on the conduct of the war
We leave Wilno for Poland on a freight train

Poland 1945-1946

We settle in Lodz
Perella goes to the Lyceum, graduates
Not much chance of coexistance of Jews and Gentiles
Polish pogroms
We leave Poland illegally for Italy

Italy 1946-1951

Problems of refugee life in Milan
Difficulties of making a living
Perella enrolls at the University
The Turin student hostel, "Casa dello studente"
My work for the Joint, transfer to Rome
Visit to Israel
Perella graduates
We leave Italy for the U.S.

United States

Mean employer
Perella's and Vova's wedding
My work for Helen Neushafer
Impressions of American education, politics
Our life in New York, "United Wilno"
Birth of grandson Lenny in 1954
Perella, Vova and Lenny go to California

After my arrival to Subocz I was interrogated by a member of the military counter-intelligence. To my shocked astonishment the questioning was not a friendly one. The sad fact was that during our first contact with the Soviet authorities we did not find the warmth and sympathy that we needed so badly but rather were faced with hostility. We tried to explain this as the Russians' desire to verify that our survival was not due to our collaboration with the Germans.

At the time we never suspected that the tidal wave of antiSemetism had also inundated the Soviet Union. However, since for the continuation of the war the Soviet Union was dependent upon the help of the United States, antiSemitism was frowned upon by the Soviet Government.

Even before the U.S. had joined the anti Hitler coalition, it became its armorer when it promulgated the Lend Lease law in May of 1941.

Since some important members of the Roosevelt government were Jewish (as the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau was in charge of the Lend Lease deliveries), Stalin tried to get the support of the American Jewry to obtain Lend Lease supplies of food and arms for the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the Jew Maxim Litvinov (Wallach, born in Bialystok) was appointed the Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

For many years Litvinov had been the Foreign Secretary of the Soviet Union and during his tenure tried to organize a common anti Hitler front with the Western Democracies.

However, in May of 1939, when Stalin decided to look for rapprochement with Hitler, his former mortal enemy, Litvinov was replaced as Foreign Secretary by Vyachislav Molotov.

When needed subsequently in 1941, the so-called anti fascist committee was created in Moscow. It consisted exclusively of Jews and was led by the actor Michaels, the Yiddish writers Itzik Fefer, Litvak and the popular novelist and war correspondent of the newspaper Pravda, Iliya Erenburg.

The fact that the American Jews, (predominantly immigrants from Russia) preserved nostalgic feelings for the "Old Country" in spite of the persecutions they were subjected to in Czarist Russia, helped the Committee carry out the tasks given them by Stalin.

At the time of our liberation in July of 1944, Jews still held important positions in the Government and Army of the Soviet Union. General Cherniakowski, the commander of the army which liberated Wilno, who fell subsequently in East Prussia and was interred in the center of our city, was Jewish.

Stalin's Jewish policy changed radically for the worse with the end of the war, when he did not need the help of the American Jewry any more. At that time Stalin started a campaign against the Yiddish language (the language used by the majority of the 3 million strong Soviet Jewry) with the closure of Jewish synagogues, of Yiddish schools, theaters, newspapers and periodicals. The publishing of Yiddish books was prohibited. Many Yiddish writers and actors were executed - all the members of the Anti Fascist Committee, with the exception of Iliya Erenburg, were murdered.

The influence of the Jewish intellectuals on the Russian culture was diminished under the pretext that they were introducing harmful "cosmopolitan" trends. (This in the country whose anthem was the "International") Simultaneously, steps were also taken to decrease the role of the Jews in the government - for example, the Jews were completely eliminated from the Foreign Service, where they were richly represented before.

The antiSemitic policy of Stalin reached its peak with the so-called Doctors Plot in which the doctors, (almost all of them Jews), were accused of maliciously causing the premature deaths of important political leaders and writers (Maxim Gorky among them). The realization of Salin's monstruous plans, which threatened the Jews with physical annihilation were fortunately aborted in the nick of time by Stalin's timely death.

Returning to the events of our personal lives, when we returned to the HKP Camp on Suboch street we heard that our friend Rosa Milecka, who left the "malina" a couple of days before us, had survived and found refuge with some Russian schoolteachers in the Rossa neighborhood. We looked her up and spent a disturbed night there, since the Germans were intensively bombing the nearby railroad station.

Next mornig, looking for shelter we went to my former customer Michal Girda who lived in a relatively new apartment house on Mostowa (Tiltu) street No 3. In 1937 I have saved Girda from insolvency and he had not forgotten it. He preserved for us the part of our clothing, furs and documents that we entrusted to him before we were taken to the ghetto, and now he willingly gave us shelter in his apartment.

The retreating Nazis had destroyed the power station and Wilno was deprived of light and water. There was a well on the street near our house from which we could hand-pump water. Our evenings were spent in complete darkness - with the blackout enforced because of the constant Nazi bombardment we didn't even dare to light a candle. During these bombardments I observed immediately that even though Ida had regained the clarity of her mind after emerging into the fresh air from the malina, her nervous system was badly shaken.

The food was rationed and extremely scarce - even these hunger rations were often not available. Fortunately we had been able to preserve the 110 golden rubles that my wife had sewn into her girdle which she wore constantly. These we used to buy bread on the black market.

A lot of our clothes (suits, coats and linen) we had gotten back from Poddany and Girda. The critical point were shoes. My daughter Perella cut up a piece of rubber tire and fastened some cloth strips onto it to fashion an improvised "sandal". My wife, exhausted from sickness and hunger, had to stumble in my heavy boots.

The town of Wilno presented a tragic spectacle - whole quarters had been destroyed. Moreover, every corner reminded us of the recent past and the irretrievably lost dear ones. And yet the realization that my life and the lives of my family were not in mortal danger any more filled me with joy as I, walking as a free man, looked up at the "three cross" hill (a Wilno landmark).

My daughter Perella's fifteenth birthday was approaching. When we asked her what kind of present would make her happy, she told us that the best gift would be the finding of a tutor for her. During the three years in the Ghetto and camp HKP she had no formal instruction, just some lessons in beginning English from Mrs Emilia Poznanską and a few in geometry by the young doctor Epstein.

After searching diligently, my wife found a mathematics tutor for Perella. Professor Mowszowicz, a lecturer at the Wilno University, lived on the outskirts of town and had the time to teach her only between the hours of seven and eight in the morning. But nothing was too difficult for Perella. Her eagerness was so great that she would leave our house at dawn in order to come to Mowszowicz before seven o'clock, just in case he could start the lesson earlier.

When he happened to meet me prof. Mowszowicz told me that in my daughter he had found a unique student, both gifted and eager to learn. Perella's ability and thirst for knowledge was so great that independently, without textbooks, she would find proofs for geometric theorems and solve twenty problems overnight. She would delve ever deeper into any problem, never letting go until everything was clarified to her satisfaction. During the six weeks remaining before the beginning of the school year, Perella caught up in mathematics for the lost three years. In this way, she was able to enter the Russian Gymnasium at a level corresponding to her age.

At this time the Jewish Partisans (among them my former employee Aaron Kagan, his second wife Dina, his brother Jasha, Gabriel Sedlis and Samek Wulc) started to trickle back to Wilno from the Rudnicki forests and the woods around the Lake Narocz. At the same time the several hundred Jews hidden by Gentiles on the outskirts of the town returned to the city, among them my brother-in-law David Gerstein with his wife Mera, my future son in law Vova Gdud with his Father Dov, Doctor Eliasz Sedlis with his son Alik and Alik's wife Mila.

The majority of my family had perished: my Mother, the families of my sisters Emma and Anya and of my brother Yefim, with the exception of Yefims daughter Dora and son Lasia who ran away to Russia with the retreating Red Army. Lasia, by then a private in the Lithuanian division of the Red Army, fell subsequently in Ponievez in the last year of the war. Dora and her husband were in Tashkent at the time of our liberation.

Two years after the war, I learned that my brother David had survived; he escaped from a French camp and hid in the mountains near Grenoble which were under Italian occupation.

My brother-in-law Mula Gerstein, from whom we had separated after abandoning the malina, had also survived with his wife Nina and son Gera.

All of my wife's family perished except for David, Mera, Mula, Nina and Gera: her Mother and aunt Sarah, her sisters Rachel and Vera with their husbands. Her brother Lova and family were at that time still alive in the Kovno Ghetto, but were soon to be deported by the Nazis to concentration camps, Lova to Dachau, his wife Marusia and daughter Perella (same age as our Perella), to camps in West Poland, where they all perished.

My wife's brother Nachum was killed by the Nazi bombing in June of 1941. David's and Mera's only daughter Zhenia was killed in the Ghetto as I described before.

After talking to the Jewish partisans, we understood that the attempt of the Polish partisans to shoot us after they learned that we were Jewish (immediately after the liberation in the yard of the bomb shelter) was in line with the AK policy of extermination of all the Jews who tried to save themselves in the forests.

Among those killed by the A.K. were the daughter of my friend Simon Kinkulkin, my acquaintance Eli Baran, and Mira Gonionska, daughter of a lawyer from Lida, who was known in the Ghetto for her beauty.

The killings by the A.K. were carried out with great cruelty.
As told by Mera Gerstein, Eli Baran, a close friend of Mera and David Gerstein, a tall, blond, blue eyed young man was installed in an A.K. group by his friend, a major of the A.K. After the Poles of the group "smelled out" that Eli was Jewish, they set him up - during a planned attack on a German installation, the Poles "evaporated", leaving Eli to be taken by the Germans who tortured him, blinding him before he was killed. Mira Gonionska was hacked to death with axes, [1] some other victims were castrated before they

---

[1] Gabik Sedlis, who was in the partisans with Mira, tells me that Mira had been killed in combat.

were killed. The Jewish partisans told us that in the forest, the A.K. was a greater peril to them then were the Germans.

My sister-in-law Mera Gerstein recounted that, after the liquidation of the ghetto in September 1943, she and David were hidden by a Polish peasant in the village of Skorbuciany. The Polish A.K. were quartered in the village, with their headquarters in the nearby house of the peasant's father-in-law.

When the A.K had discovered two Jews, a young girl and her father, under the floor of a cow-barn, they accused them of spying - they killed the father immediately and brought the girl to their commander at the headquarters - after one week the girl was shot too.

A military priest of the A.K. declared during a service held in the headquarters: "Our first enemy are the Jews, then the Germans". Actually, the A.K. was fighting against the Jews, not the Nazis. This fact was incomprehensible, since the A.K. was carrying out orders from the Polish Government in exile in London, in which Polish Jews were represented.

Felek Wolski is a Pole from Wilno who, with his wife Maryla Abramowicz, helped save many Jews at the risk of their lives and was instrumental in the survival of the Sedlis family; his opinion, therefore, is very authoratative, (even though no Pole had ever admitted the A.K.'s guilt); Felek says that the outrages against the Jews were perpetrated not by the mainstream A.K. but by a splinter group of the A.K., the N.S.Z.[2] the armed arm of the O.N.R.[3], the ultra-radical part of the ENdeks, the student "beaters".[4] These radical splinter forces frequently did not follow the commands sent from London.

On the other hand, ZEGOTA, the Committee to Provide Aid to the Jews was established by the A.K. in Warsaw and Cracow.

In the Rudnicki forest the Jewish partisans operated together with the Lithuanian Communists, under the leadership of Zimanas (a Jew), former editor of the Lithuanian Pravda, who had been parachuted in from Moscow.

From the partisans returning from the forests around Narocz, who had operated together with the Russians under the command of Markov (also parachuted from Moscow), we were shocked to learn about the antiSemitism prevailing there too. The Jews were often deprived of their arms, in some cases even secretly killed by their "comrades in arms".

The activities of all the partisans were directed predominantly toward the destruction of the German railroads and lines of communication.

The Jewish partisans gave short shrift to those Jews who, as ghetto policemen, had collaborated with the Nazis. Some were shot (Levas, Bernstein) some transferred to the NKVD for trial, (Lonia Ferdman) others were killed still in the forest (Rink, Zalzwasser). Glazman (of whom I wrote before), one of the founders of the ghetto resistance and a former friend of the ghetto commandant Gens, was forced by the latter to abandon the ghetto with his followers; all of them, among them the policeman Brause and his wife were ambushed near Wilno. Glazman survived the ambush but fell later, fighting the Nazis in the forest around the village Koziany..

Immediately after the liberation, my wife became aware of a relapse of her glaucoma condition. Fortunately, professor Ignacy Abramowicz (a Jew converted to Christianity) who had operated successfully on her glaucoma in 1935, had survived and agreed to take care of her again; even though this time less successfully.

The surgery had to be repeated 2 1/2 times, first an iridectomy, then cyclodialysis, but even that didn't relieve the pressure on the eyeball completely, this threatened the optic nerve. The surgeries were performed in the eye clinic of St. Josef situated near the railroad station which was constantly bombed by the Nazis.

---

[2] Narodowe Sily Zbrojne (National Military Forces)

[3] Oboz Narodowy Radykalny

[4] palkarze

The situation was complicated by the unavailability of the drug pilocarpin. Professor Abramowicz, an amazingly kindhearted and generous physician even paid personally for my weakened wife's hansom cab fare.

As far as the course of the war on the east front was concerned, the Soviet Army was very successful in the south and in the center, where they reached the outskirts of Warsaw on the Vistula on July 31st, 1944. They were less successful on the Baltic shore, (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) where were the concentration camps containing the healthier and stronger (those who passed the selection) men and women deported during the liquidation of the Ghetto of Wilno. The Germans held on there for several months, because of Hitler's insistence maintaining communication through the Baltic sea.

From Kaiserwald where they were incarcerated, the women, among them Mrs Zeldowicz, mother of Mila Sedlis (Pani Genia), were transferred by sea to the German concentration camps in West Prussia.

The destiny of the man's camps in Estonia was diverse. Some of the men were transferred to Germany; my friend, Dr. Alosha Perevoski and his son Marek, a childhood friend of Perella's, were taken to Dachau, where they perished. Others, from Kloge, where the physicians were incarcerated were exterminated - only a couple of people were able to hide, survived, and came back to Wilno; Dr. Buzanski, Severyn Zaidler.

Now, turning to the war developments, I want to mention a political event that could have shortened the war and saved the lives of millions of Nazi victims.

On July 20th, 1944, during a meeting at the German Headquarters in East Pussia in which Hitler took part, baron Stauffenberg, a member of a conspiracy in which took part members of the German high command, (Erwin Rommel, hero of the African compaign and others) succeeded in exploding a time bomb, placed under the table.

The explosion resulted in many victims, but disastrously Hitler escaped with just some contusions and took immediate cruel revenge on the conspirators.

As soon as the Red Army reached Praga, the suburb of Warsaw on the east shore of the Vistula, the Polish A.K. revolted in Warsaw against the Germans under the command of Bor Komarowski, expecting a speedy support from the Red Army.

But just as one year before, in April of 1943, the A.K. did not help the Jews in their desperate plight during the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the Red Army stood indifferently by during two months and allowed the Germans to suppress the Polish uprising and deport the fighters to concentration camps in Germany.

Stalin had his own accounts with the Poles. In 1941, according to an agreement between Stalin and general Sikorski, the premier of the Polish Government in exile in London, the diplomatic relations between the Polish and the Soviet governments were restored.

The former Polish citizens, both soldiers and civilians who were deported to Russia in the years 1939, 1940 and 1941 (from areas occupied by the Soviets according to the August 1939 Molotov - Ribbentrop agreement) were freed from the camps. The Polish general Anders was allowed to form an army and leave Russia to join the Allies in the Middle East. Also according to the Sikorski agreement, many civilians deported from our city on the eve of the German attack on Russia were released from the concentration camps. The majority of them went to Middle Asia, among them my wife's cousins Shapiro and many of our acquaintances.

The relations between the Polish and the Soviet Governments were interrupted by the Soviets again, when the Poles accused them of killing the

12,000 Polish officers taken prisoner by the Soviets in 1939. Their bodies were found by the Germans in 1943 in the forest of Katyn, near Smolensk. Among the victims of Katyn were several Jewish physicians from Wilno who were mobilised into the Polish army in 1939. One of them was our friend and physician, the stomatologist Hanek Bloch, son-in-law of Saul Trotski - the chairman of the Judenrat, killed by the Nazis.

After our liberation in Wilno the relations between the Poles and the Russians were not of the best. Since the members of the A.K., were shooting from the ruins at the Soviet soldiers under the cover of darkness, the Soviets started to deport thousands of Poles, mostly the well-to-do, to Siberia.

In finding employment after our liberation I didn't have the difficulties I had to face in the past, in 1940, as a nationalized businessman. My great losses, my suffering and my gratitude toward my liberators purified me of my anti communist bias. In my person, the Soviets had a devoted worker, eager to serve their best interests.

Unfortunately, I soon came to the conclusion, that in the communist system there is no place for honest effort.

Besides, I found it very difficult to adapt to the Soviet realities even though, in order to inspire the nation first to resistance and then to the fight to the victorious conclusion of the war, Stalin had to give up, temporarily, the realization of some communist dogma to reawaken the natural feelings of patriotism of the Russian people.

Stalin also had to postpone his internal pre-war measures, aimed at the transformation of the people into a blindly obedient mass by the extermination of the intelligentsia.

Immediately after the liberation the Soviet Lithuanian government returned to Wilno from Russia.[5] The real power lay in the hands of the so called Org Buro headed by Michail Suslov, who later became one of the most influential members of the communist Politburo of the USSR (the kingmaker).

With the communist Lithuanian government there returned to Wilno the protegee of the vice chairman Shumauskas, my close relative, Fima Alperavicius. Fima was the son of my father's niece, but because in the last century many Jewish women were married at the age of fourteen, the niece, daughter of the eldest child, was older than her youngest uncle. Fima's father, a rich lumber merchant, was the owner of a large apartment house in Wilno. Our families were very close. Before they purchased their house, they were leasing the estate Hanuty, property of the count Starzynski. During my childhood we used to spend the summer months on the estate Hanuty with them. Before they moved to Wilno, Fima's eldest sister Bertha lived in our house while attending the gymnasium in Wilno. In 1924 Fima graduated from the Polytechnicum in Ketten, Germany with the degree of engineer and then spent several years in Paris, where he was a close friend of my brother David.

Fima, an unprincipled opportunist, was able to adapt to the Soviet system which consisted of slaves and slavedrivers. Fima was adroitly able to join the latter.

Fima became the head of the main office of the Lithuanian Republic's Ministry of Building materials, Production and Reconstruction. Fima employed me as the Head of the Planning Bureau of the Ministry.

---

[5] with the President Paleckis, head of the Politburo Sneczkus, head of the Sovnarkom Gedvilas, and his deputy Shumauskas.

In the socialist economy the planning is supposed to carry out the functions of the Market Mechanism of the Capitalist system. Therefore, planning is of foremost importance.[6]

At this point, since it characterises the life in the Soviet Union, I would like to mention what I had been told by Halpern. Before the war, in the thirties, Halpern worked as a bookkeeper at the Shell Oil Co in Kaunas. He had gone as a tourist to Russia and visited his relative, Samuel Minsker, the former tutor of my brother David, who, as I mentioned before, had joined the communist party in 1917.

Minsker, at that time, held a responsible position as head accountant of the Central Agricultural Bank. Minsker's wife, sick with tuberculosis, was not Jewish; they had a son and a daughter. Halpern described to me their living conditions, typical for Russia at that time.

In spite of Minsker's high position, his whole family was crowded in one small room and the furniture consisted of one two-legged bed, the other end propped up by bricks, and two benches occupied by the children.

Halpern spent the years of the war in lower Tagil in the Urals. When he decided to return to Lithuania, he had to bribe the cashier with a bottle of Vodka to get the railroad ticket.

On the way back he again visited Minsker in Moscow. The wife was dead by then, the son, a wounded war veteran, was a black marketeer who lived in Moscow with his father.

Halpern told me about the scene he witnessed between the father and son: "Why aren't you at the front?" asks the son. "Because of my age" answers the father "Not your age, but your nationality is the reason." said the half Jewish son. The allusion meant that the majority of Jews were deserters - a false opinion, widely spread in Russia at that time. About the terrible antiSemitism prevalent in Russia I heard from many other sources, even though this mood was not Government supported at that time, for reasons I've mentioned before.

Coming back to my duties as chief of the Planning Bureau of the Building and Reconstruction Ministry: since the retreating Germans had destroyed all power stations in Lithuania, the modern brick producing plants were at a stand still. The only operating plants were the primitive ones, where the clay was mixed by horse power, the bricks were hand made, the raw bricks were sun-dried and then oven baked in Hoffman ovens.

Under these conditions the production of bricks was limited to the summer months.

The plants under the direction of our Ministry included also a window glass manufacturing plant in the town of Radziwiliszki. Since most of the windows in our city had been shattered by the explosion of an ammunition train at the railroad station, with the approach of winter the leftover glass on hand at the plant represented a great treasure. My superior Alperavicius, a man of low moral fiber, was well aware of the great value of what was at his disposal. His main occupation was not the organizing of the reconstruction of the ruined cities, but rather the handing out of the precious window glass to those powerful enough to fortify his position.

---

[6] Our Ministry headed by Alperavicius was composed of, besides my planning department: the personnel department, headed by a Lithuanian communist Balunchik, the unofficial representative of the NKVD, the department of production, headed by a very talented engineer Shillingas, graduate of the Czarist military - engineering academy of St. Petersburg, former director of Palemonas, the biggest modern brick plant in Lithuania, now at a standstill,
the department of bookkeeping headed by Halpern, two building trusts (one headed by Gudynski, the son of the former owner of a big modern brick plant, Sargenia, also at a standsill because of the lack of power), and the supply procurement department headed by the converted Jew Biglinas.

The food, as I mentioned, was very scarse. To service and provide for the privileged there were special outlets, always full of American goods and foods. "Speztorg"-the special store for the NKVD and "Voyentorg" for the military command. As an official in a responsible position, I was accorded a special ration card "A", also with a special outlet.

On this occasion, I would like to describe how the food was apportioned in this supposedly classless society.

For instance, fat: Government officials, Politburo and Sovnarkom had a monthly ration of 10kg. of sweet butter. As an important official I got 3 kg. of American lard a month. The corresponding monthly ration of fat of the worker and the civilian population, to whom belonged my wife and daughter, was 600 g. of lowest quality sunflower oil.

Other products were distributed in the same proportion and what was worst, after a long wait in line, these civilian daily ration coupons were frequently not redeemable; they were irretrievably lost because of shortages of produce in the regular ration stores on the designated day. Perella was standing in line for my "A" rations one day, hoping to get lard, when she was told that the store was out of lard and was given another white sticky substance in the jar she brought. Suspiciously she stuck her finger in and licked - ecstasy!! it was her first taste of sweetened condensed milk. She knew it possessed the incomparable beauty of the mythical Princess Nestan Darzhan she had just learned about in school. Perella knew that she had to sell this delight and buy bread, as she did with most of my "A" rations, but thought she would just lick it a couple times...soon the jar was empty.

This was the reality of this classless paradise for the working population to whom in October 1917 it was promised that in a socialist society everyone would contribute according to his ability and receive according to his needs.

Returning to our Ministry, the reconstruction of the destroyed cities of Lithuania and the production of the required building materials was considered so important by the Government that all clerical and blue collar workers were excused from the draft. As the technical supervisor for our unit, Moscow sent us Yurkovski, the former head engineer of the Moscow cement plant Gigant (Giant), one of the few idealists that I came in contact with at that time.

Even though I was new to the Soviet system, my western education helped me to accomplish my duties successfully. Though initially appointed acting head, I was soon confirmed as the permanent head.

For the purpose of coordination the central planning bureau (Gosplan) of the USSR had a representative in our republic, one Nosov. His deputy, Vladimir Nikolayevitch Petrov, visited our department frequently.

My Planning Department employed about twenty people, predominantly engineers. The cost estimates of the intended construction were calculated for the required materials not in real terms, but according to prices as they were in 1926 in rubles.

Our quarterly plans for production of building materials had to be submitted to the planning commission of the Lithuanian Republic for confirmation. They in turn had to submit the plans of investment in the Lithuanian Republic for approval to the Gosplan of the USSR.

Our capabilities were extremely limited since the country had been destroyed, deprived of energy and transportation by the retreating Nazis. To my amazement, ignoring the above, (probably to impress Moscow), upon insistence of the Lithuanian cabinet (Sovnarkom) we embarked upon plans of huge investment. For instance, plans of building in Wilno a huge airplane factory.

Since even those modern factories which had escaped destruction were at a standstill because of lack of power and only the primitive ones were working, my plan for the fourth quarter, starting on October 1st, was counting only on the production of brick, lime and roofing cardboard.

In mid September, Alperavicius and I went to the planning Commission of the Republic to submit our production plan in which the baking of 5 million bricks in the Hoffman ovens, and the production of lime and roofing cardboard was foreseen. Since for the baking of bricks we needed dry wood (no coal being available) at the same time we requested a supply of firewood in quantities according to the norms prescribed for this purpose.

The meeting took place under the chairmanship of engineer Ozarskis, the Deputy for industrial affairs of the Party Secretary Snechkus.

Ozarskis found the production quantities submitted by me as much too low. Do you think, Comrade Esteravicius, do you imagine that we do not intend to rebuild Lithuania? We ARE going to rebuild Lithuania, and the neccessary bricks will be supplied by YOU, Comrade. My explanations, that the quantities were limited by the amount of sun-dried brick on hand, since September was the last sunny month, did not persuade Ozarskis, to the contrary: the production of bricks was to be quadrupled to 20 million, with the other materials increased correspondingly.

I remember that after coming back from the meeting I gathered together the managers of the brick plants.

My announcement that, according to the demands of the planning commission of the Republic, during the rainy 4th quarter they would have to bake four times as many bricks as they had raw sun dried bricks prepared during the sunny season, was met with the incredulous derision it obviously deserved.

This destroyed the respect for the PLAN whose sacredness was always impressed upon us. At this opporunity I would like to explain that, actually, during the summer months we could have produced more raw bricks, but to accomplish this we needed an incentive for the worker to work more intensively, which we lacked. To get his basic wages the worker had to fulfill the established quota. In case of overfulfillment of the quota, the wages were increased proportionately. The basic hunger rations were barely sufficient for work to fulfill the quota.

The additional wages which would be brought in for the overfulfillment of the quota could not buy the neccessary food, which the worker would have to buy on the black market where the prices were more than tenfold higher. The investment of the extra effort was a losing proposition for the worker. When I brought this problem up at the regular meeting of the department heads of our ministry and proposed that we should pay for the overfulfillment of the quota in produce, my proposal was turned down indignantly by Belunchik, who said that in our socialist society the love of our Fatherland, not self interest was the stimulus for effort.

The 4th quarter began on October 1st, but only on October 5th did we receive the Forestry Ministry notification about our firewood allowance.

We received 5 times what we requested, with only one crucial difference: instead of the needed dry firewood, they allowed us a 100,000 cubic meters of timber - trees still growing near Riga, several hundred miles away. Even if a miracle should happen and we could bring the wood to our plants (for this we lacked the time - the quarter had started already, we also lacked the manpower, the carts and railway carriages), the wood would be green and therefore unusable for months.

All this seemed like mockery and irresponsibility. For consolation they gave us 500 cubic meters of dry wood, delivered to the railway station Bezdany, 30 miles away. However, the ministry possessed only one truck for bringing the wood to the factories and Alperavicius found more urgent work for our truck - the transporting of the fine furniture abandoned by the Germans in Memel for our Government big shots in Wilno.

"Comrade Esteravicius," said the production head Shillingas on this occasion, "I need firewood, I cannot bake the bricks with my penis."

The fuel dilemma was solved, but only partially, by the circumstance that on the plants there were remnants of coal brought in by the Germans. I concentrated these remnants into a few plants and this way we were able to fulfill 20% of the plan for bricks forced upon us, 2% of the plan for lime and 0% of the plan for roofing, because of the complete lack of the needed materials.

Discussing our unsatisfactory results with Yurkovski, our technical supervisor, I observed that, actually, it was the function of the Planning Commission of the Republic to reconcile the plans with our capabilities. Unless we do so, we keep people away from the army, knowing that they will be idle. "As you see, planning is a delicate matter" was the peculiar response of Yurkovski.

However, the reaction of the Communist Party (Politburo) organs was not so tolerant. Comrade Shafkoplas, the Instructor of the Party's Central Committee, qualified me as a pernicious element. "In the Orenburg steppes, where we were evacuated, we overcame even harder conditions and fulfilled our plan."

As far as the fulfillment of the investment plan was concerned, we contrived to satisfy the requirements of the system by the following tricks: as I mentioned before, the costs of our investments was calculated not in real terms but in expenditure of rubles instead. Therefore, without the pounding in of one nail, just by transferring the cost of the timber in rubles from the Building Trust account to the account of the Forestry Ministry, we would declare the investment plan for the quarter fulfilled in the percentage that the cost of timber constituted in the cost of the whole investment.

Next quarter the same trick was repeated by the transferring of the cost of the bricks, (in rubles, according to the cost estimate) from the account of the Building Trust to the account of the Ministry of the Building Materials and we would declare the plan fulfilled to the percentage that the cost of the bricks, in rubles, constituted in the cost of the whole investment.

The most amazing part of this was the fact that our juggling with the plan was not a secret from the manager of the Industrial Bank Mowszowicz, whose duty it was to check on the fulfillment of the inestment plan.

One of the functions of our planning department was the reporting about our monthly accomplishments to the Central Statistics Office of the Republic. The following fact shows the value of stastistics at that time and place. The manager of the statistics office (Cunkhu) used to call me on the first of each month for my monthly report of our accomplishments, which he had to submit to Moscow. When I would tell him that I was unable to do so since I had no data, (the delivery of a telegram took a month, the telephone didn't work), he advised me to give my "wishful thinking" guesstimate.

All these facts could not but cool my original eagerness to serve my new Fatherland devotely. It was also very hard for me to adapt to the fact that the "Party Line" prescribed from above did not tolerate criticism and even less deviation. The newspapers were full of hymns to the wisdom and greatness of Comrade Stalin and the tremendous achievements of the socialist Fatherland.

On the Anniversary of the October Revolution the party organ Pravda printed an article written by Stalin. That evening we all gathered to celebrate this memorable day. To my surprise, there were no speeches emphasizing the reasons why this day should be celebrated, just a thickly accented Georgian read Stalin's article from the morning paper word for word - that was all.

For myself, who grew up with the give and take of a free press and among the free exchange of opinions, this atmosphere, in which the thought of the individual was strangled, was unbearable.

Combined with all this was the realization that in this land of mass repression, my past of having once been a successful businessman could bring tragic consequences any day (businessmen were persecuted as a class).

This fear was intensified by the following occurrence. In the period of the Civil War, my host Michal Girda, (an orthodox Russian born in Grodno) fought as an lieutenant of a Cossack regiment in the white (counterrevolutionary) army of Baron Wrangel. In 1920 this army had to evacuate from the Crimea to Bulgaria. From there Girda returned home and, in the mid-twenties opened an accumulator (batteries) workshop in Wilno. At that time batteries were used predominantly to operate radios in the unelectrified villages. During the thirties Girda's workshop expanded into a large retail electrotechnical business with two outlets on the main streets of the city. To this contributed in a large degree Girda's exclusive representation in Wilno of the largest in Poland independent radio manufacturing plant "Electrit", to which I supplied the radio tubes Tungsram.

Girda, a devoted customer of mine, bought radio tubes, bulbs, batteries, parts and bicycle tires from me. As an influential member of the Business and Industrial Bank's Board of Directors I was able to save Girda from insolvency when in 1937 he got into serious financial difficulties.

With the outbreak of the World War II and the occupation of Wilno by the Soviets, Girda opened a small battery repair shop after being compelled to liquidate his electrotechnical business. He continued to operate this small repairshop before, during and after the German occupation.

During the Nazi occupation when I was working at Poddany's HKP car repair shop which was next door to Girda's workshop, I was frequently sent to the latter to charge the vehicle batteries. During our encounters Girda always gave me moral support. Being a Russian patriot he never missed the opportunity to inform me about any success of the Red Army.

After the liberation Girda would go to his repair shop each morning and would return home in the evening. One day he failed to return. Worried, we started to look for him in the hospitals and even in the morgues, but without any results. After one month without any news about his fate, my wife suddenly appeared at my place of work with the news that our appartment was being searched by the Soviet Military Intelligence Service and their chief demanded my presence. When I came home the chief, a captain, told me that Michal Girda has been arrested by the Military Intelligence "Smersh" and has given myself, a victim of the Nazis, as reference that he was a devoted Russian patriot.

He gave me a note from Girda, asking me to tell the whole truth. The captain told me that he intended to interrogate me soon for this purpose.

After one week he appeared at my place of work, required an isolated room and started to question me. In my testimony, which he recorded, I emphasized Girda's great help and support for the victims of the Nazis, his hate of the Nazis and devotion to Russia. However, inadvertantly I confirmed the captains statement that Girda had spent some time in Bulgaria, not suspecting the consequences of this confirmation. Before asking me to sign the official record of my testimony, the captain read its contents aloud to me. Everything that I had said favorable for Girda was mentioned, but at the end there was an addition saying that during the Civil War Girda fought as a member of the white (counterrevolutionary) army and had been evacuated to Bulgaria.

When I protested that I never said anything about Girda's participation in the "white army", the captain answered "That is obvious, how else would he end up in Bulgaria ?"

"That may be a possibility," I objected, "but Girda never told me about it and I cannot testify to what I do not know" and I refused to sign the protocol. For two hours the captain persuaded me to sign, without threats, but so insistantly that after he gave his word of honour of a Russian officer that they were not going to punish Girda now for what happened 25 years ago, and that the record that he asked me to sign was entirely in Girda's favor, I finally gave in and signed. I was heartbroken - I went home and confessed my weakness to Girda's wife. I found some consolation in the fact that next day the same happened to Girda's wife - she too finally confirmed Girda's participation in the "white army".

Girda's tragedy reminded me poignantly that I too was sitting under a Damocles's sword, since, as a nationalized businessman I had been considered a harmful element in the past. Moreover, after working with the socialist system I realized that in the best of cases my family and I were condemned to a life full of privation. In the Soviet Union the ultimate goal was not the well-being of its citizens, but the triumph of a doctrine, with all the negative consequences of this fact. In addition, the following facts contributed to my sobering up.

A general meeting of all the workers of our ministry took place at the beginning of 1945, in the presence of the highest party and government officials (all fat with big bellies, which was especially striking in view of the general starvation). The report on our unit's achievements was given by Alperavicius.

In the prescribed manner, he started his report with self-criticism.

"Yes, comrades, we have to admit that we have worked badly. And why are our achievements so unsatisfactory? It is because Comrade Esteravicius didn't analyze adequately, and Comrade Shillingas was not sufficiently active."

This turning of myself and of Shillingas into scapegoats for the sins and inadequacies of the system filled me with disgust. When the opportunity to leave the Soviet Union presented itself, neither I nor my wife and daughter hesitated in seizing it, even though we were not sure whether it was safe to do so.

We were not unique in our decision to leave the Soviet Union - 95% of the Jews liberated in 1944 did the same.

According to the Teheran agreement between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, the western boundries of the Soviet Union were pushed far to the west to the so called Curzon line - thus all of eastern Poland became part of the Soviet Union. In consequence, a treaty between the Soviet Union and the "friendly" Polish Government was concluded at this time, allowing the former Polish citizens, (Poles and Jews only) to repatriate to Poland, whose western boundries, in turn, were pushed far to the west at the cost of Germany.

At this point I feel it is pertinent to describe my meeting and conversation with the Deputy Representative of the Gosplan of the USSR, Petrov.

"Comrade Esteravicius, I hear that you are going to leave for Poland" said Petrov when we met on the street.

"I can not permit this, you are one of the two talented people I have found in Lithuania. I will go to the "Sovnarkom" and ask them to prevent you from leaving."

"Vladimir Nikilayevitch," I replied " I am new to the Soviet system, and I have to admit that the present standard of living does not satisfy me, but the war is still going on. Tell me please, after the war, with the help of 20 million German slaves, can we expect better conditions?"

"Twenty million of German slaves and an "x" number of our own slaves." retorted Petrov.

"In this case, why do you want me to stay here?"

"That is what I am obliged to say. I have to warn you - don't talk to anybody. This is a cruel system that punishes until the tenth generation." was Petrov's reply.

On the following day, when we were alone in my office, I said: "Vladimir Nikolayevitch, I should not be so open," (My wife was always terrified that one day the openness of my talking to people would bring disaster down upon us.) "but I am talking to you as one human being to another, tell me, what is the reason? If the socialist doctrine was implemented successfully in the Soviet Union, you would have a thousand arguments at your disposal. But if the only argument is - "be silent or you will go to the Polar Bears", that indicates that this is a complete economic failure. Please tell me, what is the cause? Are the leaders not on the level, are the workers at fault or is the system not viable?"

Petrov sat silently, head drooping for a long time. After a long silence he told me: "The stimulus for work is absent." About my opinion that this was only part of the truth I have already written before.

Here I want to say a few words about Petrov and what I learned from him. Petrov was an engineer geologist, a communist since 1917. Until Yezhov's (Stalin's) purges of 1937, Petrov had been a high Government official - the Deputy Chairman of the "Sovnarkhos" of the USSR, the highest economic counsel of the Soviet Union (at that time there were no separate ministries)

"How did you survive the purges?" I asked.

"I don't know. I never talked to anybody then, or go anywhere. Maybe that was why I survived." Petrov replied.

At our following meetings Petrov was open with me. He told me: " We all passionately desire the end of Stalin's regime!". Of all the Russian leaders of the 1930ies, he was most impressed by Rykov, the purged Chairman of the "Sovnarkom" of the RSFSR, who perished as a member of the rightist opposition.

The other important thing that sticks in my mind is Petrov's saying, surprisingly: "Of course the locomotives, Studebakers and airplanes that the United States has delivered to us were very important and extremely useful, but America had saved us with their food deliveries. In 1942, (not counting the starving cities), even the armies were completely deprived of nourishment. If it were not for the American food deliveries through Iran and Vladivostok, we would have been liquidated in 1942." Regrettably, this is all that I can recollect from my many long evening conversations with Petrov.

Looking at the course of the war, the Russians resumed their attack on the central front after a four-month pause and attained the river Oder, where they encountered a strong German resistance and only reached Berlin in April, capturing it at the beginning of May.

Hitler and Goebels committed suicide with their families on April 30th, 1945 and Himmler a few days later.

Germany's capitulation followed on May 8th.

At the Potsdam meeting of the Allies (at which France participated for the first time) it was decided to put the leaders of the Nazi Germany on trial for crimes against humanity.
The vanquished Germany was partitioned into four zones. Since the whole city of Berlin ended up in the Russian zone, Berlin was also divided into four zones garrisoned by American, British, French and Russian troops.

On the 6th of June 1944, two weeks before the beginning of the Russian offensive which brought them to the shores of the Vistula, the American, British and Canadian forces under the command of General Eisenhower, taking advantage of their air superiority, succeeded in landing in France on the beaches of Normandy.

The Germans offered extremely tough resistance and only in mid August did the Allies enter Paris. Even though no French troops took part in the costly landing, the French division of Leclerc was awarded the honour and the privilege of entering Paris first.

In my opinion the events I delineate here could have shortened the war and would have changed the map of Europe.

We have to live up to now with the negative consequences of the missed opportunities that followed.

According to the plan submitted by the British Marshal Montgomery, all the combined allied forces should have concentrated on a narrow front, in order to seize the Ruhr basin where the German war industry was concentrated.

According to the memoirs of Albert Speer, Hitler's supply Minister, this industry was still able to increase its arms production till the end of 1944, in spite of heavy bombing.

Seizing the Ruhr would have undoubtedly hastened the desired outcome of the war, at a time when the Russians were still on the Vistula. However, this plan assumed that the American forces under Generals Bradley and Patton would come under the command of Marshal Montgomery. Since 1944 was an American election year, this last fact was the reason why the initially accepted Montgomery plan was rejected on Washington's insistence. Instead, it was decided to advance on the whole front. As the result of this decision the allied forces were only able to cross the Rhein in March of 1945, when the Russian army was already at the outskirts of Berlin.

This fact had immense political consequences. Undoubtedly, it influenced the decisions taken at the Yalta Conference, which assigned Mid Europe to the Russian sphere of influence.

During the 1945 Allied Yalta Conference, Churchill and Roosevelt recognised the Committee of National Liberation, (formed by the Russians in Lublin in August of 1944) as the future Government of Poland. They did so only after Stalin had assured them that he did not intend to "communize" Poland, he just wanted to have a friendly Government there - it would be expanded to include the members of of the Polish Government in London.

Since Roosevelt and Churchill have been accused lately of having betrayed Poland in Yalta, we should remember the following:
a) The demands of Stalin for a friendly government in Poland were understandable with the Polish behaviour in 1938, when Poland helped Hitler to dismember Czechoslovakia, still fresh in peoples minds.
b) Poland's eastern boundries, agreed on in Yalta, coincided with the so-called Curzon ethnic boundries, established for Poland at the Versailles Conference in 1919, at which Russia was absent.
c) Russia's tremendous sacrifices in blood made her immensely popular in the Western World at that time.

After Poland was freed from German occupation, the Lublin Committee of National Liberation became the Government of Poland with Boleslaw Bierut as President,[7] They were shortly joined by the Premier of the Polish Government in exile in London, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, who, after realizing that Stalin had no intention of keeping his promise not to communize Poland, escaped back to London.

---

[7] Osobka Morawski as Premier, the Jew Hilary Mintz as the Minister of trade and industry, and the members of the left-leaning Dembinski sudent group consisting of Stefan Jendrychowski, Muta Dziewicka, Pietrusiewicz, Sztachelski from the Wilno University of Stefan Batory in influential positions.

Moscow had no illusions about the anti-Russian sentiments of the Polish population and at first relied mainly on the Jewish communists - the Jew Berman was the "grey eminence" and the state Security Office (UB) contained an disproportionately large number of Jews.

The other world shaking event, the beginning of a new "atomic" era whose unimaginable consequences (for the whole planet) we are living with now, was the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan. Japan's capitulation followed in August of 1945.

The bomb was the product of the so called Manhattan Project started in 1943 at the direction of president Roosevelt, after Albert Einstein declared it feasible.

Before our departure, on April 12th, the world learned of the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and about Harry Truman (an unknown) becoming President of the United States.

We left Wilno in cattle cars, (still apprehensive that me might end up being taken east rather than west) in the middle of April 1945, bringing all our clothing, linen, bedding, rugs and even my Mother's sewing machine.

Since Warsaw was completely destroyed, at the end of April we disembarked in Lodz, a big textile manufacturing center created by Jews and Germans, [8] the second largest city of Poland and very little destroyed by the war.

In Lodz we found refuge in the luxurious apartment (in the best quarter of town on the Aleje Kosciuszki) of David Dynin, the nephew of my brother-in-law Naum Zlatin. David was in Palestine, but his wife, son and daughter were in Poland, they survived hiding as Aryans.

We felt very unwelcome in Poland. The Poles thought that they had gotten rid of us - we should have been dead.

It was clear to us that Poland should not be our final destination.

The illusion nurtured by the Jewish socialist party, (Bund and other left leaning groups) that Jews could be able to coexist as a minority with a hostile majority was a mistake based on unjustified optimism. This was proven by the recent events as well as by the fact that the Germans were not alone in bringing about our annihilation. The fact that the patriotic German Jewry, in spite of its tremendous contributions to German art, literature, science and economy, with [9] became the first victim of rabid antiSemitism during the rule of Hitler, a promoter not of Christianity but of Teutonic mythological megalomania, refuted the prevailing opinion that antiSemitism was caused exclusively by the hostility of the Christian Church and our voluntary cultural isolation.

The above made it abundantly clear that the problem of antiSemitism could only be solved successfully with a Jewish state.

The following occurance, at the beginning of May, showed how apprehensive about our safety we Jews were. That night we were awakened by the sound of explosions. All the inhabitants of the apartment were terrified, considering this to be the start of the Polish pogrom, aimed at exterminating the incoming Jews from the east. In reality, those were the firecrackers and shots of jubilation about the conquest of Berlin.

---

[8] I. K. Poznanski in the 19th century, Osher Kahn (Widzew) and Naum Etingon after the first World War, and many others. The Germans Scheibler and Groman and many others.

[9] Max Reinhart in the theater, Heinrich Heine in poetry, Wasserman, Stefan Zweig and Fanz Werfel in literature, Mendelsohn and Gustav Mahler in music, Albert Einstein in physics, Fritz Haber in chemistry, Paul Ehrlich and Sigmund Freud in medicine, Emil Ludwig in history, Theodore Wolf, Maximilian Harden in journalism, Rudolf Mosse, Ullstein in the press, Karl Marx in economics and social science, Albert Ballin in commercial navigation (Hapag), Emil Rathenau, AEG-one of the biggest electrotechnical concerns, All the department stores were founded by Jews, as was the whole tobacco industry, The unprecedented industrial expansion of pre-Hitler Germany was unthinkable without the predominantly Jewish Banks.

Many people were now living in this huge apartment. Among them was the attorney Rachel Lauenberg, born Schik, niece of Naum Zlatin. Rachel lost her husband but survived hidden by gentiles in very hard conditions.

Rachel helped me to get employed as an economist in the main office of the Tobacco State Monopoly; since its main office in Warsaw was destroyed, it was located in the building of its Lodz tobacco factory. The Tobacco Monopoly, which employed 250 people, was headed by the communist Nodulski. I was the only overt Jew. My direct superior, head of the business department was Rosenberg, a converted Jew.

As my first task I was immediately sent to Lublin to buy tobacco on the black market. In Lublin I met Doctor Sedlis (who was recovering from a heart attack) and his family, Alik and Mila. Mila's mother, Mrs Zeldowicz was one of the few survivors of those women who, after the liquidation of the ghetto of Wilno, were originally taken to Latvia to the concentration camp Kaiserwald near Riga, and later transferred to camps in western Prussia.

My next assignement was the purchase of office equipment in the former German territories given to Poland - the city of Wroclaw.
Since this was the period when the vanquished, starving Germans in order to get food were selling their belongings for next to nothing, many enteprising people were exploiting this situation to get rich.

Like Wilno, Wroclaw was made a stronghold by the Germans to slow the Russian offensive and was therefore very much destroyed. I have been to Wroclaw (Breslau then) with my mother and sister in 1913, during the Centennial Exposition commemorating the Battle of Leipzig of the Napoleonic Wars.
It was dusk when I descended from the train and was aproached by a young German who begged for help saying that he was hungry. Having been brought up in the tradition that one does not hit a fallen foe, (in spite of my declaration to my daughter that I would strangle the first German I met), I automatically gave him money. Feeling a little guilty about my inability to hate, I confessed what happened to my daughter. She got very mad at me, saying that she lost her respect for me.

At this time, (to the Poles great disappointment), the Jews who had run away from the Germans, or had been deported by the Russians, started to come back from Russia in the hundreds of thousands. Among them was the attorney Ilya Zaks, the husband of our neighbour Alexandra who had shared our room in H.K.P. and was killed during the liquidation of that camp. Attorney Zaks, a man of great common sense, was one of the most finacially successful attorneys of Wilno. As the legal advisor of the radio factory Electrit, he was deported to Siberia together with Electrit's co-owner Naum Levin; Levin perished there. Zaks survived thanks to the food packages sent by a former client, the millionaire Weibul from Landskrona, Sweden, owner of factories of tannery chemicals. Zaks had been the legal advisor of their enterprise in Poland. I mention Zaks in view of the positive role he subsequently played in our lives.

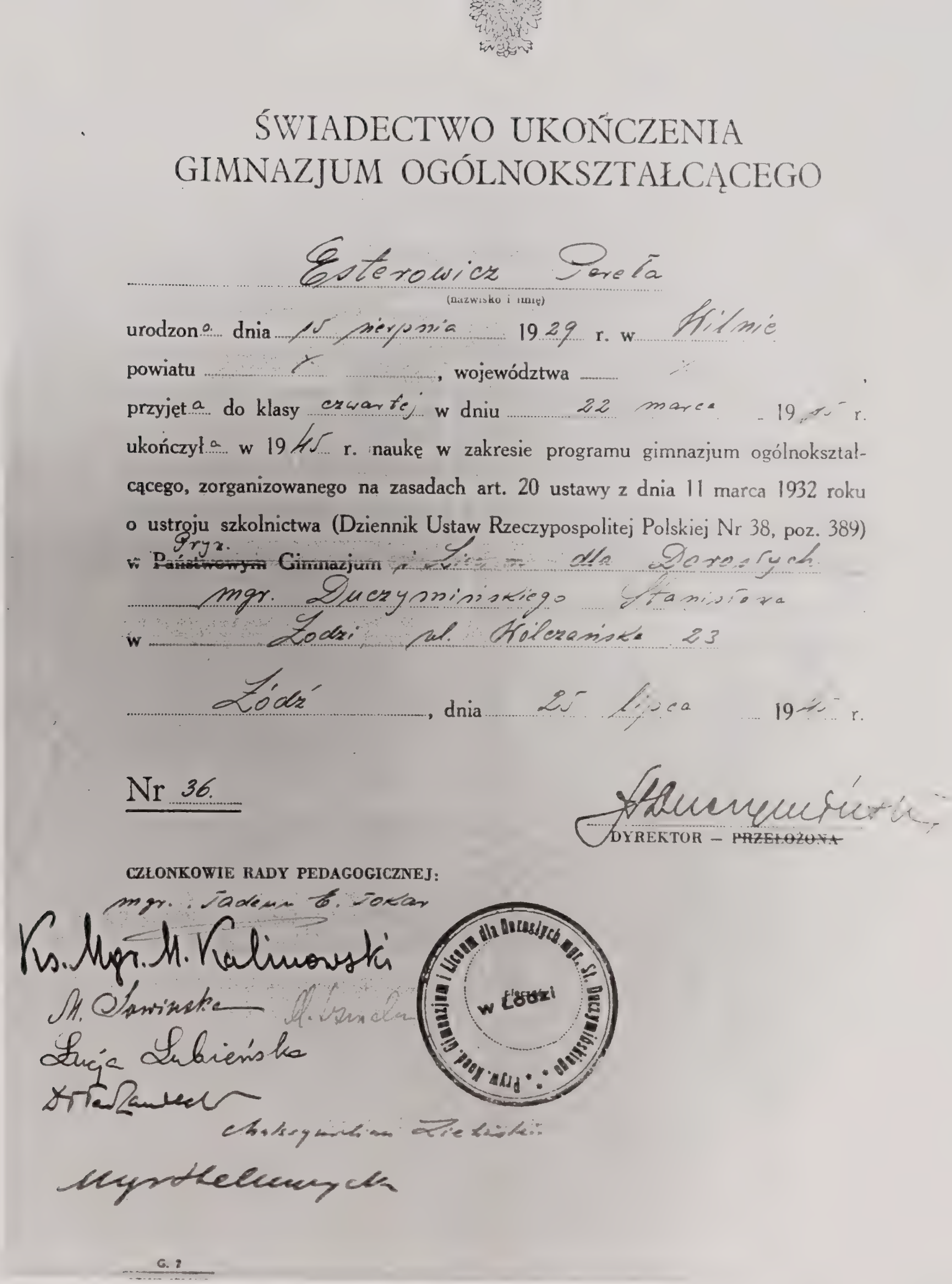
The majority of the Jews, taking advantage of the easy frontier crossing during the aftermath of the war, left Poland, stopping temporarily in Germany or Italy.
Among them were Mula and David Gerstein and their families, Ilya Zaks, the family Sedlis, and our friend Rosa Milecka (another H.K.P. neighbour). We

stayed behind temporarily, to give our daughter Perella the chance to finish Gymnasium (High school) in a language familiar to her. She enrolled in an accelerated Lyceum and accomplished two years in one, graduating in July of 1946 with a Matura, a secondary school diploma.

The Bierut Government, starting the bolshevization of Poland, wanted to give it an illusory "image of legality" by arranging Referendums - everything supposedly being done according to the wish of the majority. Since most Poles were anti-communist, the results of the Referendum had to be falsified. Under the pretext that the ballot count could only be done safely in the Central Office, the ballot boxes were switched while being transported to the latter, with the fake ballots giving complete approval to the communization of Poland. However, the Government was in possession of the real ballots. How the real results looked I learned from my boss Rosenberg, who was a close friend of deputy Finance Minister Schwalbe. The supposedly red, proletarian Lodz "showed up very badly indeed" according to Schwalbe.

As the bloody anti Jewish excesses became more frequent in Poland, Jewish lives outside of the big cities were ever more endangered. In the summer of 1946 my wife went to the summer resort Krynica with Zlatunia Trocka, (widow of the Chairman of the Judenrat of Wilno, killed by the Germans) with whom we got very friendly in Lodz. They had to interrupt their vacation because of the mortal danger they were exposed to there as Jews. In 1946 the anti Jewish excesses had spread to the big cities too - Krakow and, most terribly, Kielce where the whole surviving Jewish population of more than forty was exterminated.
In the morning of the so called "Kielce excesses", knowing nothing about these events, I came to work as usual. I shared an office with a Polish Count named Osowski, a typical opportunist (playing the part of a communist, devoted to the new regime). I found Osowski pacing the room, wringing his hands and exclaiming:
"What a disgrace, these, after all are innocent people !"
"What happened?" I asked Osowski.
"Don't you know, my wife heard on the early news this morning that in Kielce more than forty Jews were killed- everybody except for the very few who could run away... What will the world think about Poland? What a disgrace, what a disgrace!"

The Bierut Government punished the murderers severely, condemning eighteen of them to death. This action was met with a storm of strikes and demonstrations by the "proletarian Lodz". Embarassed by such a reaction, the government arranged some "consciousness raising" meetings in the factories of the city. One such meeting of 1200 factory and 250 office workers took place in the cafeteria of our factory.
The first speaker declared that the Kielce events were against the Christian moral law. The second speaker, a member of the Polish Socialist party, (PPS), accused the capitalists of instigating hatred in one part of the population against the other, to achieve their ugly aims. The Communist party representative (PPR) said more or less the same. They proposed a resolution condemning the Kielce excesses.
A wild shout NO! NO! was the answer. My office messenger jumped onto the podium yelling: "I was in Lwow when the Jews were killing Polish children!" This was met by the crowd with a bestial explosion of hatred for the Jews. As the only Jew there, I ran out of the room, completely shattered by the realization that even after the extermination of three million Polish Jews, so much hatred remained.



ŚWIADECTWO UKOŃCZENIA GIMNAZJUM OGÓLNOKSZTAŁCĄCEGO

Esterowicz Perela
(nazwisko i imię)

urodzona dnia 15 sierpnia 1929 r. w Wilnie
powiatu ✗, województwa ✗,
przyjęta do klasy czwartej w dniu 22 marca 1945 r.
ukończyła w 1945 r. naukę w zakresie programu gimnazjum ogólnokształcącego, zorganizowanego na zasadach art. 20 ustawy z dnia 11 marca 1932 roku o ustroju szkolnictwa (Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Nr 38, poz. 389) w ~~Państwowym~~ Pryw. Gimnazjum i Liceum dla Dorosłych mgr. Duczymińskiego Stanisława w Łodzi ul. Wilczańska 23

Łódź, dnia 25 lipca 1945 r.

Nr 36.

DYREKTOR – ~~PRZEŁOŻONA~~

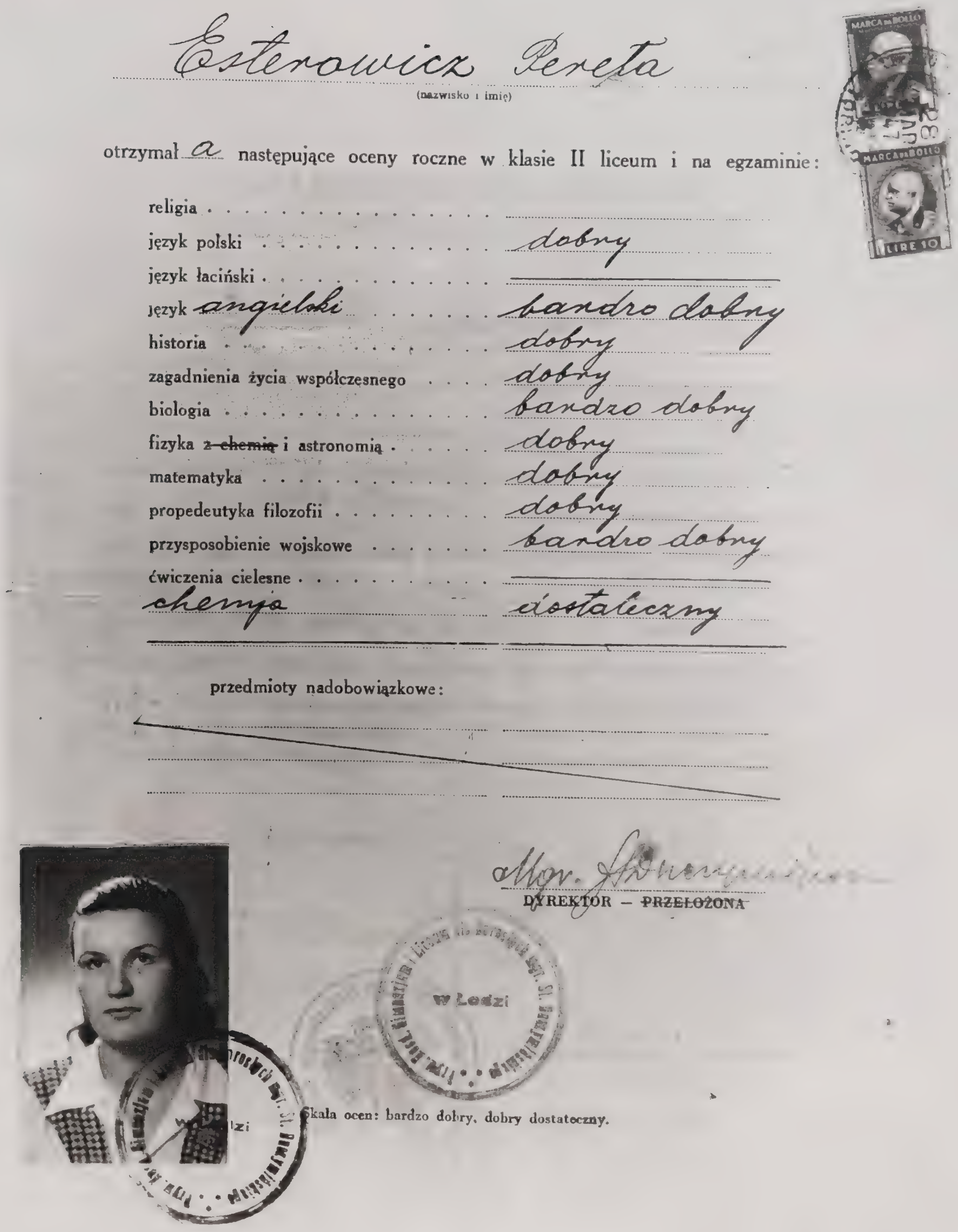
CZŁONKOWIE RADY PEDAGOGICZNEJ:

mgr. Tadeusz C. Tokar
Ks. Mgr. M. Kalinowski
M. Sawinska
Łucja Lubieńska

G. 7

CERTIFICATE of GRADUATION from COMPREHENSIVE GYMNASIUM of PERELA . ESTEROWICZ born 15th August, 1929 in Wilno. She was accepted to the fourth Gymnasium grade on March 15, 1945 and completed the studies of the Comprehensive Adult Gymnasium at 23 Wilczanska str. in Lodz. Lodz, July 25th, 1945

(Perela was able to make up for the three years she lost during the Nazi occupatio
She transferred after repatriation from the Russian language Gymnasium of Wilno to the Polish Gymnasium in Lodz, Poland.



Esterowicz Perela
(nazwisko i imię)

MARCA DA BOLLO
LIRE 10

otrzymał a następujące oceny roczne w klasie II liceum i na egzaminie:

religia	
język polski	dobry
język łaciński	
język angielski	bardzo dobry
historia	dobry
zagadnienia życia współczesnego	dobry
biologia	bardzo dobry
fizyka ~~z chemią~~ i astronomią	dobry
matematyka	dobry
propedeutyka filozofii	dobry
przysposobienie wojskowe	bardzo dobry
ćwiczenia cielesne	
chemja	dostateczny

przedmioty nadobowiązkowe:

Mgr.
DYREKTOR — ~~PRZEŁOŻONA~~

w Łodzi

Skala ocen: bardzo dobry, dobry dostateczny.

PERELA ESTEROWICZ June, 1946

Was awarded the following grades at graduation from the Scientific Lyceum (All the grades were Good and Very Good, except for the Sufficient that an Anti Semitic teacher awarded her in Chemistry, the subject she was most interested in and subsequently earned a Doctor's Degree at the University of Turin, Italy)

[illegible] High School class 1946 Lodz Poland
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

High School friends
Lodz, Poland
1946 (white shirt)
middle.

[illegible] High School class
[illegible]
[illegible] 1945-46

[illegible] – 1947

[illegible] – 1948

At this time, a former member of the P.A.L partisans, (in contrast to the A.K., the P.A.L. did not kill the Jews) walked into my office and told me about what took place in the room next door. When one engineer Tomaszewicz said: "I pity Esterowicz, he is a decent fellow and now he is so shattered."
Osowski jumped up and yelled: "What, you feel sorry for a Jew!" This was the same Osowski who a few days before was wringing his hands about the "disgrace of Kielce".

I was finished with Poland then, even when they wanted to delegate me to the Finance Ministry as a man with experience in the "planned economy"; I knew we had to get out as soon as possible, especially since Perella had already received her Matura, the secondary school Diploma.

At that time attorney Zaks sent to us an experienced guide who could bring us to Italy (by crossing many borders illegaly).
To be more mobile we sold some of our belongings - the sewing machine, our pre war carpet, my wife's fur coat, my daughter's squirrel collar and cap, (and so on), and bought 120 English paper pounds from my good acquaintance Wilkomir.
The reason I bought the pounds was a much lower exchange rate (unfortunately, I was aware of the proper course). From before the war I preserved 35 paper pounds and, upon inspection could see no difference between the old and the new (the new were 5, 10, and 20 pound notes).
I did not know that because the Germans had counterfeited the higher denomination pound notes during the war, the British Government had retracted from circulation all the paper money, starting with the 5 pound denominations.

The Bierut Government, seeing that a stand against Poland's wild antiSemitism would make them even more unpopular, was glad to get rid of us and did not interfere with the mass exodus of the Jews from Poland.
Unofficially they were even helpful, as we saw when the Polish officials helped us to cross illegally the border into Czechoslovakia.
We were led by the Jewish organization "Bricha", which directed us by train to Vienna, the Austrian capital. In Vienna we were located in the former Rothchild Hospital. The war's destrucion was very striking in Vienna, I remember - even in the park Prater.

We soon left Vienna over Saalfelden and reached the Brenner pass, where our luggage was taken up by the "Bricha", to be transported over the Italian frontier by truck.
Led by the Bricha, our group, membering about 200, had to climb the steep and slippery mountain paths on foot. My wife, wearing high heel shoes could not make it - she kept sliding down. She had to take off her shoes and walk barefoot in the snow for about 10 miles - as a result she got a sciatic nerve inflammation.

After we finally climbed over into Italy, we were taken in the trucks of the Palestinian Brigade to Merano, where we took a train to Milano. Since we had no railroad tickets, we were instructed, in case of inspection to answer with one word only - "capo". Nobody bothered us on our journey, we tried to speak Yiddish to the Italian passengers - they looked so Jewish.

In Milano we found my wife's brother David and his wife Mera who had already been living in Milano for a year. They placed us in an expensive hotel for one night.

Since it was impossible to find any private room accomodations, we had to go and live in the UNRRA refugee camp Scuola Cadorna where we registered as refugees on November 3rd, 1946.
Because of excruciating sciatica pain, my wife was placed in a hospital.

During this period the Jewish refugees were concentrated in Germany, (several hundred thousand) and Italy, about 50 thousand, in UNRRA camps - by that time the name had been changed to IRO [10] camps.
For the Jewish refugees the basic IRO support was supplemented by the American Joint Distribution Committee (Joint).

The majority of these refugees intended to go to Palestine, but Great Brtain, in spite of the promises of the Balfour Declaration kept Jewish emigration to Palestine to a minimum (Britain had the mandate over Palestine from the League of Nations) To this anti Jewish policy of the Labour government, (Foreign Secretary Bevin) the Jews responded with illegal immigration, (Aliyah Bet) striving to by-pass he English blockade by sending clandestine boats from the ports of France and Italy. The immigrants, if caught, were interned by the British in a concentration camp on the island of Cyprus. Our friend Busia Elstein fell ill with tuberculosis in this camp.

In Palestine at this time there were three "underground" (not sanctioned by the British) Jewish military organisations.
First the Haganah, an arm of the "shadow government", (the Jewish agency), protected the Jewish settlements against the frequent Arab attacks.
Second, the Irgun Zvai Leumi retaliated for Britain's anti Jewish policy through terrorist acts against members of the British Army, by the dynamiting of the British Headquarters in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem and by freeing the Jewish prisoners from the British prison in the fortress of Acco.
Third, the Stern Gang who, in addition to the above activities, retaliated against the Arab excesses by killing Arab civilians. This last was not approved by the majority of the Jews.

Returning to our lives, the hardship of the crowding and the wild noise of the refugee camp compelled us to seek private accomodations, an almost impossible task, since the center of Milano was destroyed by the war and the remainder of the city overcrowded by the wave of newcomers. Fortunately, my former employee Aaron Kagan found private accomodation and was able to transfer to us his room in a moderately priced hotel. After one month we were able to rent a room in a private apartment on via Lanzone, from a very unpleasant landlady, Signora Di Chiara.

Our family had entered Italy illegally, but the Italian Jewish community helped us to get the residence permit (Soggiorno).
The charm and friendliness of the Italian people opened a new world to us. Perella felt that the warmth of the Italians made it possible for her, (in spite of past persecution), to believe that the Gentiles were human.

Besides the housing difficulties, the tenfold higher food prices were a hardship for us. The other shock awaiting me was the discovery that my 120 English pounds (which I bought at such favorable exchange before leaving Lodz), were Nazi counterfeit. The only exchangeable ones were the 35 pounds I bought before the war.

---

[10] International Refugee Organisation

My attempts to find employment with the Joint were unsuccessful in spite of my education and experience since I didn't know English; they would have considered Perella who had some knowledge of English, but she hoped to enroll at the University and we did not want her to interrupt her studies.

Since Italy was overcrowded and the Italian businessmen were very enterprising, the foreign refugees couldn't manage to be included in the legal business system.
Almost all the newcomers, (congregating on the via Unione) were occupied with illegal transactions - buying and selling of counterfeit money, (Austrian shillings, American military script) and smuggling.

Since I was unsuited to such enterprises, I needed to establish a legal trade contact with some business outside of Italy. The only foreign contact I had was with Mexico, where Jasha Zondowicz, the brother-in-law of Mula Gerstein, owned a large automobile business. Thus I started to visit automobile factories in Milano, (using German to overcome the language barrier), to look for possible export opportunities. I found a factory (former producers of airplanes) Caproni in Brescia which was going to produce miniature cars. When I requested and received a price on 500 of such cars, I cabled Zondowicz and he accepted the offered cars, but to my dismay, when I came to the factory with the good news that Mexico had accepted their price, they answered that "they have changed their mind". In this way I discovered that some of the the charming Italian businessmen were not reliable. The other Italian factories refused to make an offer of their merchandise, stating that Mexico was not a natural market for the Italian industry (for Lancia).
Because of the high prices and the shocking discovery that my 120 pounds were worthless, our financial situation was not very bright.
The winter of 1946-1947 was an unusually severe one. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that Italian houses were not built for such temperatures and there was no coal available for central heating.
We had to install a pot-bellied little stove in our room, but the only wood available was so raw that it gave more smoke than heat. As a result, nowhere have we suffered so much from cold as in sunny Italy.

At that time my brother-in-law Mula Gerstein, his wife Nina and son Gary were living in Rome, as were the family Sedlis, Mrs Rosa Milecka and the attorney Elias Zaks. My daughter Perella went to Rome to visit the Gersteins and, after her return applied to the Industrial Chemistry Department of the University of Milano (after she had learned in high school that linoleum was produced from linseed oil, she was so impressed with this miracle of science that she decided chemistry would be her life's work).
The Italian application process is lengthy and complicated - she had to send all her documents to be confirmed by a Doctor Leonardi at the the foreign ministry in Rome. After everything had been confirmed and all the documents were sent back to Milano, (including her acceptance and her precious Matura, (her high school diploma), they all vanished into thin air. Perella was desperate - she couldn't continue her education without her Matura. Finally a kind, German speaking Jewish student took her to the Dean and translated when she described her sad plight to him. The Dean was touched and ordered a search for the documents. Miraculously, they were found (misfiled) in the Archives of the Graduates.

The Jewish refugees received help from the American Joint who supplemented the basic I.R.O. support.

The I.R.O. provided for refugee self-administration by organizing committees in each of the refugee camps scattered all over Italy. These consisted of representatives of all the Zionist Organizations (it was assumed that all the refugees were bound for Palestine).
Simultaneusly, the Central Refugee Organization (Merkaz), headed by the attorney Garfunkel, a Zionist originally from Kovno, was estblished by the Joint.
An autonomous refugee commission was organized to control all of the committees, including the Merkaz in Rome. The members of both the Merkaz and the Control Commission were modestly salaried by the Joint.

My friend, the attorney Elias Zaks, one of the members of the Control Commission, was summoned to Sweden by the Weibul Company just at that time. The Weibuls wanted Zaks to organize the production of tanning materials from the quebracho tree in Brazil.
Before leaving, Zaks turned over his position as member of the Control Commission to me. Thus I became an employee of the Joint, with a small salary. This solved my financial problems, giving me a chance of making a modest living in Italy.

Since there had been no improvement in my wife's suffering from the schiatic nerve inflammation, she was sent by I.R.O. to Aqui, a resort near Genova, for mud bath treatments. The treatments were successful and she could return to Milano and share the room on via Lanzone with us.

In the fall of 1946 the Joint established, with I.R.O. basic support, a Jewish refugee student hostel (Casa dello Studente) upon the initiative of three medical students, Vova Gdud (my future son-in-law) and his friends Jasha Brauns and Isaac Geleris.
Vova and Jasha were survivors of the Holocaust, Isaac fought with the Lithuanian Division of the Red Army.
They managed to persuade the Joint Director Gelbert, (a kind man) about the merit of giving the survivng Jewish students a chance to work out their aspirations in an environment conducive to their fruition.

Vova was the secretary of the Jewish Refugee Student Union organized by him in Italy with the help of an Italian Jew, Luciano Coen, a student of engineering. Vova managed, through the help of the former Lithuanian Cultural Attachee Maciavicius, to establish a relationship with professor Leonardi of the Foreign Ministry. This enabled him to help arrange the acceptance to the University of Rome of many Jewish refugee students who lacked complete documentation. Isaac, who conceived the idea of a refugee student hostel after staying in the Italian hostel, was able to do the same in Torino with the help of the administrator Ivo Matucci.
Jasha found the beautiful, large, dilapidated villa on a hill across the river Po from the park Valentino in which most of the University buildings were situated. The villa's owner, Count San Buy was willing to lease it to the Joint if the neccessary restoration would be performed. Upon the student's request, the Count insisted on a four year lease - this assured the "Casa" a longer existence.
Perella decided to join the "Casa" and continue her education in Torino. She proved to be a diligent chemistry student.
One day in June of 1947 we received in Milano an exultant telegram from her - she had gotten the top grade from De Paolini, the most exacting and feared professor of Organic Chemistry.

We used to visit her often in the Casa dello Studente and got to know her friends - Vova, now her husband, Bernard Roizman, a Russian speaking student from Romania. We also met Jasha Brauns and Isaac Geleris, now practicing physicians still very friendly with Perella and Vova. Gabik, the son of Doctor Sedlis whom we already knew was also in the Casa.

This Casa dello Studente proved to be of immense value, giving the young people "derailed" by the war the chance of becoming useful and even outstanding members of the society. For instance, Bernard Roisman, now a world renowned virologist started his first college year in the Casa. Gabriel Sedlis became an outstanding architect and Samek Wulc a highly regarded inventor in the field of electronics. From the Casa came many excellent physicians, chemists and engineers.

As I already mentioned, the I.R.O. camps were scattered all over Italy, from Torino in the north to Bari in the south and were administered by the Refugee Committees.
Generally the refugees were survivors of concentration camps or the hardships of Syberia, where honesty was not a survival characteristic.
As a result of this the majority of the camp committees did not believe in "noblesse oblige"- they looked on their position not as a responsibility but rather as an opportunity for grabbing better food and accomodations for themselves. Thus there were abuses at the expense of the rank and file of the refugees.
I considered the protection of the weakest as my prime responsibility.
On the other hand, I knew that it would be futile to try to prosecute past wrongdoings. My efforts were mainly directed toward the prevention of these abuses in the future, or at least toward making them more difficult to commit.
Toward that end I had to establish the accountability of the storerooms where the food delivered for distribution by the Joint and I.R.O. was concentrated.
For that purpose I had to separate the functions of the storekeeper from the committee authorizing the allottment and determining its quantity. With this there would be no single person in charge who could both authorize the withdrawal and remove the food from the storeroom, thus being able to sell it on the black market.
Nevertheless, even these precautions couldn't prevent the food from disappearing on the way to the kitchen from the storeroom.
I arranged that every day another refugee would in turn "accompany" the food from shelf to kettle. However, many regarded their turn at "guard duty" as just a chance to be payed off with an extra slice of the common pie.
Whenever I would visit a camp I would always check the caloric value of the daily portions to see that they were adequate. That required some study of the caloric value of foods. I still remember that oil gave the highest value per Kilo and cucumbers the lowest.
I also had to secure the mail from depredation; in the Cremona camp 1000 stolen letters, containing cash from relatives in the U.S. and South Africa, were discovered upon search of the lodgings of the representative who picked the mail up from the post office for all the inhabitants.

Then came the big scandal of the postal parcels, the so called "pigeons".
The Joint representative told me, aghast, that in the U.S. the charitable "town of origin associations" - the "landsmandshaftn" were flooded by thousands of begging letters. They were sent by refugees who described their sad plight, complained about the bad camp conditions and said that the Joint gave them nothing, therefore harming the collection of funds for the Joint.
For the big swindle the refugees taking part pooled their funds to buy stamps, there was a division of labor: some found the different charitable "town of

origin" associations, others researched the authentic names of the town's inhabitants, the third wrote the heartwringing letters sure to bring a positive response. It appeared that each of these "gangs" sent these begging letters (called "pigeons") to the respective "landsmanschaftn" in the names of hundreds of nonexistent people.

The Cremona postmaster came to me complaining that he was put in a very difficult situation - he was threatened and had to cooperate with the swindlers, with one person picking up tens or hundreds of parcels addressed to nonexistent recipients. For instance, on the day of my visit to Cremona 500 Care packages had arrived for nonexistent people.

I told the camp office that I was putting a hold on these parcels and they should not be released. I was threatened by the swindlers who demanded the release of the parcels. They screamed "Don't you dare to mix in! Don't you get your salary from the American Joint?"
Their demands were supported by some members of the camp committee who were also sending out "pigeons".
Every camp had a representative from Palestine, a sheliach. Such a representative in Cremona was a man named Rudy, originally from Wilno, a former classmate of my nephew Gera (Emma's son). Rudy was also representing I.R.O. in the camp.
I asked for his help with the "pigeon" scandal, calling to his attention the importance of this issue since it was harming the Joint collections in the United States. He was reluctant at first, but then helped me to negotiate with the representatives of the "pigeon industry". We came to an agreement that most of the parcels arriving under ficticious names (since they were under way already) would be sold, and the proceeds distributed to the needy of the camp. After three months all the illegal parcels would be confiscated.

One of the Merkaz branches that I had to inspect was the Milano Merkaz Geula, which was in charge of the illegal immigration to Palestine. One of my duties was the checking of its accountability. I found that there was a lot of waste of the funds provided by the Joint - for instance, there was a lot of long distance telephone calls on private matters charged to the Merkaz.

With time my work was being appreciated, and even though I was only responsible for northern Italy, I would be called south when there were problems there.

In 1947 the Joint was embarassed by the discovery of large scale pilfering in their Rome warehouse and by the arrest by the Italian police of twenty of their employees. Apparently the police was investigating the origin of some American clothing sold on the market. The investigation led them to the Joint warehouse on Macao and to the discovery of large depredations. The Joint had to buy their employees out from the police. Gitlin, the head director of the Joint in Italy entrusted the organization of accountability to me (to the American employees great displeasure).
I found a chaotic situation with no possibility of monitoring. I instituted some reasonable accounting techniques and brought things under control.
It gave me great satisfaction to know that Joint turned to me even though they did not want me in 1946 since I din't know English.

The blood of the six million innocent holocaust victims burdened the conscience of mankind. In May of 1948 the United Nations (including the Soviet Union) voted for the creation of an Independent State of Israel through the partition of Palestine and the Internationalization of Jerusalem. As a result the Jewish state was created with Ben Gurion as Prime Minister and professor Chaim Weizman as President. It should be remembered that the

United States, upon the direction of President Truman who took this step against the advice of the State Department, was the first country to recognize the new state. Israel's proclamation of Independence was met immediately by a concerted attack of all the Arab states.The heroic defense of the Jewish people (deprived by the British pro Arab policy of the possibility of acquiring arms) successfully repelled the Arab aggression. The history of the War of Independance is full of episodes such as the heroic struggle to reach the cut off city of Jerusalem, besieged by the Arab Legion trained by the British general Galub Pasha (the building of the so-called Burma Road). There were many such heroic episodes, such as the defense of the Kibbutz Degania and others, which claimed many victims.

According to the United Nations partition plan, Jerusalem was supposed to be internationalized. Since the Arabs did not accept the United Nations resolution and overran the Old Jewish Quarter, after the cease fire the Old City of Jerusalem, containing all the holy places, ended up under Jordanian occupation and the Jews were deprived of access to the Western Wall until June of 1967, when Jerusalem was reunited under Israel.

Contesting the opinion of some progressive thinkers, some prominent Jews among them (professor Magnus, president of the University of Jerusalem and the philosopher Martin Buber), who considered the United Nations decision on the partition of Palestine contrary to the principle of self-determination of populations, I want to respond with the following:

In the first place, the Holocaust, by shattering the illusion of the possibility of a coexistance between the Jews as a minority and a hostile majority, emphasized the dire neccessity for an independent Jewish national home. Palestine (Zion), was venerated by the Jews for 2000 years; it inspired them to great sacrifice, to work in inhumanly hard conditions, it was the proper place for such a home.

Secondly, the Arabs who left the Jewish part of Palestine did so without being expelled by the Jews but left upon the call of the Arab Governments, who assured them they would soon be able to return after the Jews were thrown into the sea.

Moreover, and most importantly, simultaneously an equivalent number of Jewish refugees from Arab countries (80,000 airlifted from Yemen alone) was absorbed by the new Jewish state as full citizens. As a result there was an exchange of populations between Israel and the Arab countries, analagous to the exchange that took place between Greece and Turkey after the first World War. However, in contrast to Israel, the Arab countries did not absorb the refugees, (as they easily could have done, less than one million into a hundred million) but kept the Arab refugees isolated in refugee camps for political reasons.

With Israel's Independence in 1948, the Central Refugee Organization (the Merkaz) was liquidated. I was the only Merkaz member whom the Joint took over, employing me as the manager of the rehabilitation center in Grotta Ferrata. The Joint was maintaining a tuberculosis sanatorium in Merano. From there the cured patients were directed to the Grotta Ferrata Rehabilitation Center for adaptation to normal life.

It appears that I was not adaptable enough for handling the demoralized majority of the patients - my expectations of moral standards were too high. I had many conflicts with them.

Consequently, I was replaced as manager by Rudy (of whom I spoke in connection with the "pigeon affair" in Cremona) and remained as Budget Controller. Thus my responsibilities were limited to the financial management.

In connection with my new job we moved from Milano, at first to Rome to a room on Via Vicenza, in an apartment of a charming and well connected lady, Mrs Candelari. Her brother was the retired director of the Banco d'Italia, her sister was the widow of an Italian general.
Through her brother-in-law who occupied a high position in the Vatican administration, Mrs Candelari arranged for us a private audience with Pope Pius XII. In a group of twenty people, we got admitted by the medieval Swiss Guards to an internal room, where the Pope blessed us in many languages. Everybody knelt except the two of us. The Pope was dressed in white and the Cardinals in red. At that time we didn't know that, according to many sources, Pius XII was an unworthy deputy of Saint Peter, being indifferent to the monstrous crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews. Pius XII saved only a small number of rich Jews after they donated their possesions to the Vatican Curia. The head Rabbi of Rome was given asylum only after he converted to Christianity.

For a year I commuted daily from Rome to Grotta Ferrata (a village on the road to Castel Gandolfo, the Papal summer residence).

At this time my daughter Perella fell ill with Thyrotoxicosis.
Since the Joint Director Gitlin refused to give my wife permission to stay in the Casa for a few weeks to be with our sick daughter, Perella had to come to us in Rome. After being put on methyl thiouracil and having my wife's tender loving care she was strong enough to go back to the Casa in a couple of months.

During our sojourn in Rome we got close to Rosa Milecka and the family Sedlis (the latter lived on via Gregoriana close to the Piazza di Spagna). Through Rosa we had gotten acquainted with Professor Kobylinski, who used to occupy (between the two world wars) the position of professor of psychology at the University of Genova. His wife, an obstetrician, (a baptised Jew) was the sister of the famous Israeli journalist, Dr. Beilinson - the late editor of "Davar", the official organ of the Israeli Labour party (A large hospital has been named in his honour in Israel). According to her, she met her husband when they both were students in Switzerland; she told us that Kobylinski was the son of a rich Russian landowner, owner of a large estate "Mayaki". Professor Kobylinski was a rather mysterious figure. According to his tales, he had been the military Governor of a region in Austria after Wold War I. On the wall of his apartment there was his photograph with the Duke Aosta, a member of the Italian royal family; he showed me letters from the famous Russian psychoneurologist, Professor Bechterev. On the other hand, when we wanted to acquaint him with the Israeli Ambassador Ginosar (the son of the Jewish philosopher Achad Ha Am (Ginsburg), the outstanding Zionist thinker, editor of the Odessa periodical "Ha Shiloach"), Mrs Ginosar declined, saying that Kobylinski was a high official of the Italian intelligence service.

Mrs Kobylinsk's life had been shattered by a terrible tragedy: their only son perished on the Russian front as a member of a fascist division sent there by Mussolini. She had a feeling that this might be God's punishment for her abandoning Judaism, and she sought our friendship since we were victims of the Holocaust.
The Kobylinski's lived in a villa in an exclusive neighbourhood. They had an extensive record library and we often gathered there to listen to classical music.

My salary from Joint, supplemented by I.R.O. gave us a comfortable living. We often spent our evenings at the caffe Doney on Vittorio Veneto (the main street).

We were able to take advantage of our sojourn in Italy to acquaint ourselves with the beauty of its art and architecture. Besides seeing the famous Milano Duomo, (the famous mural by Leonardo da Vinci "The Last Supper" on the walls of the church "Madonna della Grazia" on via Magenta we didn't get to see since it was in restauration). We visited Venice in 1947, with its Piazza San Marco, the Cathedral, the Doge's palace and the riches of its paintings.[11] The Venetian school was one of the richest of the Renaissance.

Rome is the Italian city richest in Renaissance architecture, painting and sculpture. We frequently visited the Vatican Library and had a chance of admiring the Capella Sistina with the ceiling by Michelangelo Buonarotti and his mural of the Last Judgement, also the paintings of Del Sarto and Boticelli. In the Vatican I also remember the gorgeous gobelines in the "Stanza Rafaela" and the huge painting "Jan Sobieski approaching Vienna" by the Polish painter Matejko.

We visited the four basilicas: San Pietro, the work of Michelangelo with his "Pieta" and the colonnade by Bernini, San Paolo fuori delle mura, Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano, the former residence of the Popes. We were especially impressed in the latter by its Museo Profano with representations of the missionary activity from all over the world, including North America. We were struck by the noble visages of the American Indians.

We admired the beauties of the Campidoglio Museum with the sculptures of the Capitolian Venus, the dying Gaul and the painting by Tintoretto "The Repentant Magdalene".

Our most beloved spot was the Villa Borghese in the Pincio park, with its sculptures and paintings. One is greeted at the entrance with the statue by Canova of the sister of Napoleon, the Marquise Paolina Borghese seated on a sofa. We were especially impressed with the work of Bernini - his dynamic "David" and the "Rape of Proserpine" with the virility of the attacker and Proserpine's femininity.

The Villa Borghese had also an excellent exposition of the paintings of Michelangelo Caravaggio, (the Italian Rembrandt) with his "Narcissus", the paintings of fra Filippo Lippi and the famous "Fornarina" by Raphael. I did not get the opportunity to visit Florence at the time when my wife met there her cousin from Brussels, Luba Izgur. (I visited Florence in 1963).

While in Milano we heard two operas at the world famous opera house La Scala. During our sojourn in Rome we heard the operas "Tosca", "Boris Godunov" and others with an exceptionally good cast - the famous singers Benjamino Gigli and Maria Caniglia, with Lemale Rossi as Boris Godunov. Some of the many operas we heard in their summer residence, the open air "Terme di Caracalla", where we froze even during the hot summer months.
We also heard many concerts - the famous "Chopenist" Alfred Cortot, and (by then already elderly) Nikolai Orlov, young Leonard Bernstein as pianist and conductor and violinist Yehuda Menuchin (Menuchin had very bad reviews). I remember that Jasha Haifetz appeared at the same time in Switzerland and was acclaimed as one of the best violinists of our century.

---

[11] Giorgione, Bassano, Titian, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Tiepolo, Canale Canaletto, Giovanni Guardi and others.

The Jewish community of Rome had numbered about fifty thousand before the German occupation. The interesting peculiarity of this community was that they belonged neither to the Ashkenazi nor to the Sephardic Jews - they were the descendants of the Jews brought to Rome as slaves by Titus, together with Joseph Flavius, after the destruction of the Temple. The members of the relatively large Milano Jewish community were mostly Ashkenazi.

The years we spent in Italy were crucial for the world and the emerging balance of power between the Free World and the Soviet Union.
The popularity of Marxist ideology was at its height in the years after the war - even the Joint Administration sent from the United States consisted of many fellow-travelers and card carrying communists who gave preference to European communists when hiring local employees. England elected a Labour Government in which socialist ideas predominated. Atlee took over from Churchill as England's representative during the Potsdam conference in 1945. Churchill's historic warning about the Iron Curtain dividing Europe came in 1946, during his Fulton speach in the United States.

The domination of the Soviet Union was spreading all over mid - Europe and the Balkans. This was made possible by the fact that we came rather late to the realization of Russia's aggressive intentions.
The United States demobilized prematurely and cooperated with the Soviet Union in the liquidation of Stalin's enemies - Vlasov was given over with his followers, and so was even general Krasnov, who lived in Germany since 1918. Germany lay in ruins and there was no power to balance the aggressive policy of Stalin who took over all the countries which arose after the first warld war upon the ruins of the old Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov empires.
The attempts to balance Russia's predominance in Europe were complicated by France's opposition to the rearming of Germany (France had been the victim of three German invasions). Communist Governments were created in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Ian Masaryk was murdered in 1948 after, the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and the resignation of president Benesz.

In Asia the United States discontinued its support of Chiang Kai Shek and his Kuomintang after General Marshall, sent there by president Truman, came to the well grounded conclusion that it was a lost cause.
Communism was victorious in China - in 1949 Chiang Kai Shek had to abandon the mainland to the communist Mao tse Tung and withdraw to the island of Taiwan.
The takeover of West Berlin by the Russian blockade was prevented only by the American airlift from June of 1948 to September of 1949.
In 1947 Greece was saved from takeover by communist guerrilla's (supported by Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) by President Truman's economic aid and his sending a group of officers to Greece (the Truman Doctrine).
In President Truman Stalin met a serious adversary.
As a matter of fact, Churchill told Truman that though he had not been very impressed with him when they first met at Potsdam in 1945, subsequently he had to admit that Truman has done more than anybody else for the preservation of the free world.
Subsequently the independent policy of Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia became a positive factor to which the United States declared its immediate support. This lessened the danger of Greece becoming a Russian satellite.
The aggressive policy of the Soviet Union was not limited to Europe. Through the proxy of communist North Korea, the Soviet Union created a trouble spot in the Pacific in cooperation with communist China.
1948 was a critical year for Italy - we were afraid of a communist takeover by Togliatti with the cooperation of the left socialist Nenni. We considered ways of getting out of Italy if this should happen. Fortunately, De Gaspari, the leader of the Christian Democratic party, was able to form a government with the help of the moderate socialist Saragat.

In the 1930ties it was still the consensus of European statesmen that national well being was based upon a colonial empire.
As a result of this line of thinking, Italy attacked and speedily conquered primitive Abissinia. England and France tried to condone this act of aggression (the agreement of Hoare and Laval) but because of a popular outcry they had to condemn this act committed against all the principles upon which the League of Nations was built. This destroyed the alliance of the first World War victors and pushed Mussolini into acceptance of Hitler's annexation of Austria.
The opinion that colonies were indispensable for the well being of the mother country was not shared after the second World War by the victorious United States. Even though the sole possessor of the atom bomb and easily able to acquire markets through conquest, when looking for markets for its huge industry (left idle because of cessation of the war effort), the United States preferred to solve this problem not through colonial conquest but through the raising of the purchase power of the surrounding countries. Having come to the correct conclusion that hopeless poverty is a fertile soil for the spread of communism, the United States promulgated the Marshall plan (declared in 1947) which helped not only its allies but even its past enemies to reconstruct their ruined economies. All the historians agree that with this farsighted undertaking, never before attempted in world history, the United States saved Europe from communism.

This was one of the stimuli for the liquidation of colonial empires, initiated by Great Britain who had borne the brunt of the war and, having emerged weakened from it, had to give up the role of the main defender of the free world. There was also an awakening of national feelings in the colonies and an urge to independence. India's Independence in 1948 was followed by the the violent creation of two nations, the Hindu India and Moslem Pakistan. The Japanese occupation of the Pacific hastened the process of decolonization and led to the transformation of the former colonies of Holland, Belgium and Portugal into a whole group of independent countries. This was followed later by France giving up Indochina.

The European countries, looking at the destruction brought about by their internecine warfare, realised that chauvinistic nationalism had been the cause of the disaster that had deprived Europe of its dominating position in the world and transformed it from master to beggar, dependent upon the charity of others. To prevent a repetition of such a disaster, Adenauer in Germany, Spaak in Belgium, Monet and Shuman in France, de Gaspari in Italy and (partially) Churchill in England perceived salvation in the unification of Europe and the abandoning of the policies of chauvinistic nationalism.

The unification of Europe was not only a political but also an economic neccessity. To meet the economic challenge of the United States, Europe had to create a market large enough to make mass production cost-effective. To accomplish this Europe had to abolish the customs barriers and take the first steps toward the creation of the European Common Market.
The world situation became more complicated after Russia exploded an atomic bomb in 1949.

After the Sedlis family left for the United States in 1949, I replaced doctor Sedlis as chairman of the union in Italy of refugees from Wilno. In most other committees, the contributions sent them from South Africa and New York would end in the pockets of the presidium members. In contrast to others, the Wilno committee, upon the initiative of doctor Sedlis, had established the rule that the members of the committee presidium were not entitled to any support.

Attorney Elias Zaks died of typhus fever in July of 1950 in Porto Allegro, south Brazil, where he managed a factory of tanning chemicals (based on quebrach) for the Weibuls. He had built and organized this factory, helped by Thorbhoern Weibul, one of the sons. Zaks and Rosa Milecka intended to settle in Israel together after his return from Brazil. Before leaving Italy Zaks made a will in Rosa's favor. In the spring of 1950 Rosa went to Israel to await Zaks there (I lent her the needed $800 at Zaks's request).

There were endless financial complications after Zaks's death. Rosa was cut off in Israel and could not open inheritance proceedings there - as an Israeli citizen she would have to receive the inheritance in Israel. The dollars would have to be exchanged to the devaluated Israeli pounds at the official low rate and would be immobilized there. Rosa called upon me for help since all the proceedings had to be performed outside of Israel. She also needed to get out of Israel and wanted to come back to Rome (both very difficult).

After his return from Siberia Zaks was able to receive 20 thousand dollars from Samuel Chwoles in London [12] and kept it together with his earnings in a safe deposit box to which Thorbhoern had access.
Thornbhoern Weibul was in Brazil and was able to take Zaks's money (30 thousand dollars) out of the safe in Porto Allegro. However, Zaks's bank account, containing the factory's operating capital and some personal funds was immobilised after Zaks's death until the legal inheritance proceedings would be carried out. The Weibuls, instructed by Rosa, cabled me for help.

Zaks's will had been made out with the Notary Fua in Rome. Fua needed a death certificate before legally releasing the will. After I contacted Weibul in Brazil he sent me a death certificate. However, it had not been confirmed by the Italian consulate and therefore was not valid in Italy.

In this impasse I was helped by Beno Elstein. Beno, originally from Kovno, was a chemistry graduate, a friend of Perella from the Casa dello Studente. Beno had fallen in love with Busia Gottlieb, obtained hard to find medicines for her and married her while she was still sick with tuberculosis. After Busia's recovery they stayed in the Joint Rehabilitation facility in Grotta Ferrata. Beno worked at the Israeli consulate and had excellent connections in Israel - his sister was married to Pinchus Lavon, head of the Histadrut.

Beno was able to obtain an exit permit from Israel for Rosa. He also prevailed upon the Notary Fua to legalize and release the will.
Professor Kobylinski helped me to get the Italian entrance visa for Rosa.
Rosa was recognised as Zaks's heir and Thornberr Weibul was able to receive from the bank the operating capital for the plant.

Weibul was very appreciative of my help and when he came to me in Rome in the fall of 1950 to leave Zaks's money for Rosa, Thorber Weibul promised that I could be the sole representative of their tanning chemicals for the Middle East, as Zaks was supposed to be after he settled in Israel. The Weibuls valued Zaks very highly. According to Thornbhoern, the loss of Zaks was a more severe blow to their enterprise than the death of his father would have been.

When Rosa arrived from Israel in December of 1950, she brought a will made out by her in Israel in which she made me the executor of the will and the heir of 40% of her estate in appreciation for my help.

Besides the thirty thousand dollars that Weibul got for her from the safe, Rosa inherited from Zaks two apartment houses in Neu Koeln, one of the suburbs of West Berlin. Since one of the houses was partially destroyed in the

[12] The owners of the factory of radios Electrit in Wilno were able to transfer a large sum of money from Wilno to London before the war (illegally). Zaks, as their attorney could take advantage of this transfer and sent 20 thousand dollars there. Samuel Chwoles was one of the owners of Electrit, the only one able to emigrate to Israel before the war.

fighting, Rosa was entitled to receive a very low interest government loan for its rebuilding. After some hesitation, I advised Rosa to authorize Jacobs, the administrator hired by Zaks, to obtain that loan, assuming that Zaks must have had positive references about him before he hired him. Jacobs would be helpful with the probate of Zaks's will in German courts, since we could not obtain the loan without it. Moreover, the loan was to be paid out in stages upon completion of the reconstruction.

In our family I and Perella (she was with us in Grotta Ferrata since Joint closed the Casa in the summer of 1950) wanted to go to Israel.
My wife was afraid that she would not be able to bear the hard conditions and nervous tension in Israel and wanted to go to the United States. Knowing that without the knowledge of English I would be limited to hard manual labor in the States, I finally made a deal with my wife: if, after visiting Israel I should not be able to establish a business as a representative of the Weibuls, we would go to the United States.

I went to Israel in March of 1951.
I stayed with my brother-in-law David and his wife Mera who then lived in Tel Aviv and had obtained an apartment there - a rarity at that time. Mera had opened a sewing salon, David opened a retail lumber business with the help of the Swirski brothers, former owners of a lumbermill in Wilno; before the war they were able to liquidate it and immigrate to Israel. They were "very successful" - Swirski, as a large lumber importer was able to get foreign currency from the Israeli government at low official rates on condition that he should sell the imported lumber at low prices. David helped him to get around this by officially paying him a low price and handing him the rest of a much higher price under the table. David, as a retailer, could sell at high black market prices.
The older Swirski brother was a great admirer of Mera Gerstein, my wife's and David's mother, whom he described as a woman of biblical virtue. In addition to their wholesale lumber business the Swirski's were co-owners of the big cement plant "Nesher".

Because of the extremely difficult food situation in Israel I carried (besides food for Mera and David), food packages from Beno Elstein for the family of Pinchas Lavon, at that time the head of the food ministry. Also, my friend Mrs Kobylinski sent through me a food package to Mera Yatziv, widow of the editor of the Children's Davar (the organ of the Labour party), who was the beloved of her brother (Beilinson of the Davar). Mera Yatziv lived in the same house as Golda Meir. She was one of the group which had come to Palestine before the first world war with Ben Gurion.

She described all the Israeli leaders for me. In her opinion Berl Katzenelnson had the most brilliant mind. Many of them, like for instance Sharett, the foreign minister at that time, had started their careers with working in lowly positions at the Davar.
Rosa, who would be my partner, gave me letters to many influential people who could help me obtain orders for the tanning chemicals. Such support was neccessary since Israel had a regulated economy. One letter was to Mr Rawnicki in whose house Rosa lived while in Tel Aviv. Mr Rawnicki, originally from Odessa, was the son of the poet Bialik's partner in a publishing company. The other letter was to Mr Brudny, the director of the Bank Ha Poalim, the second largest bank in Israel (after Bank Leumi).

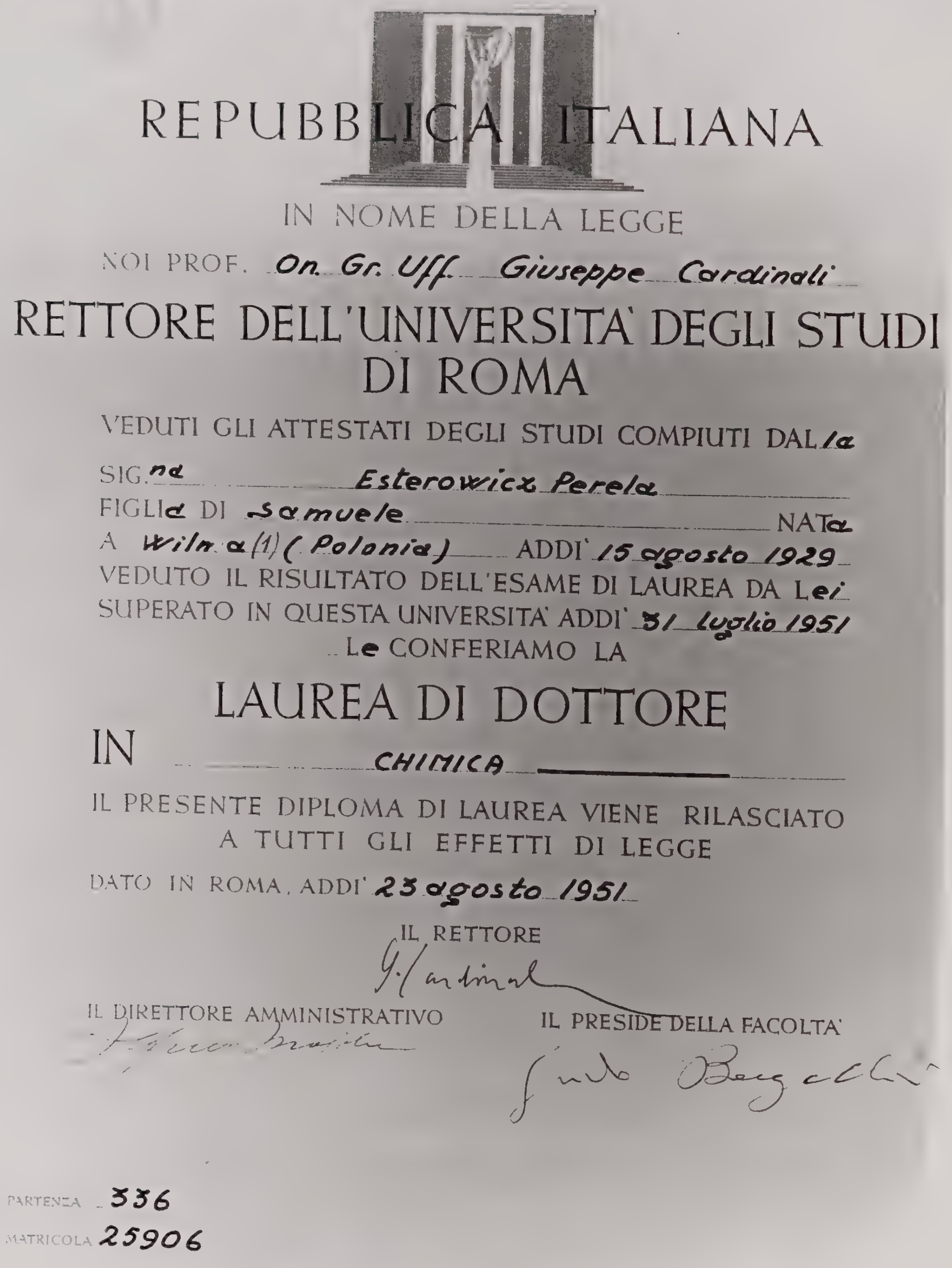
As an interesting aside, Mr Rawnicki told me that in Odessa he had attended the Cheder (Jewish religious school) with "the Russian landowner", professor Kobylinski.

With the help of Rosa's contacts I speedily obtained orders for 60 thousand dollars worth of tanning chemicals from the Union of all the tanneries in Israel, but had to await the permission from the Finance Ministry to get dollars at the low official course, without which I could not get payment in hard currency for the tanning chemicals and my transactions could not be realized. While waiting I decided to do some sightseeing; I visited the port of Haifa and was struck by the marvelous panorama of the bay from Har ha Carmel (Mount Carmel). I also visited with my sister-in-law Mera Gerstein the Israeli part of the then divided city of Jerusalem (the Jews had no access to the holy places). We visited Mea Shearim, the neighborhood of the ultraconservative Jews (Neturey Karta). In the market place there, all the men were bearded, the boys wore orthodox sidelocks and the women all wore wigs upon shaven heads. I was accosted by an old bearded Jew who offered, in Lithuanian accented Yiddish, to sell me a religious calendar (luach). Surprised that he talked my "Wilner" Yiddish, I asked him: "Uncle, where were you born?" He informed me that he, as well as his forefathers, were born in Jerusalem. He spoke Yiddish since Hebrew, the sacred language, could be used for worship only. The Neturei Karta did not recognize the newly founded state of Israel, since Ben Gurion was not the Messiah, (mounted on a white horse) whom they were still awaiting.

Even though the Israeli constitution was progressive, establishing a one cameral parliament and general, proportional, secret ballot elections, as a liberal diaspora Jew I was distressed by its lack of separation between religion and the state. For example, the Law of Return granted automatic citizenship only to newcomers of Jewish faith born to Jewish mothers; there was no civil marriage nor divorce and no city transportation on Saturday - to mention just the most important instances. David did not advise me to immigrate to Israel, since I did not possess the several thousand dollars needed for getting an apartment. Rosa wanted to buy us a house, but I refused it saying that favors done in friendship should not be paid for. I only allowed Rosa to present to Perella a gold Omega watch as a graduation gift, after Perella received her doctor's degree.

The conditions were very harsh for newcomers, since Israel had to absorb a flood of refugees which descended upon the Promised Land after the proclamation of Israel's Independance. The world Jewry supported the new state generously, especially so the United States Jews.
According to the agreement of Naum Goldman and Konrad Adenauer, the chancellor of Germany, West Germany awarded large indemnifications to the Nazi victims and to the state of Israel.
In spite of all this support, the majority of the newcomers were still in temporary camps, in terrible housing conditions (tin shacks).

Paradoxically, the Jews, long regarded as bad warriors proved to be excellent sodiers, whereas this nation of traders was very unsuccessful in arranging its economic life. Its Labor government did not choose for Israel free enterprise in a free market system, (which in the completely destroyed and deprived of raw materials Germany created the "economic miracle", even though they too had to absorb 15 million refugees). The Israeli government preferred to follow the English model of a strictly regulated economy, where not economic factors, but good connections - "protekzia" was decisive in the success of an enterprise.



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

IN NOME DELLA LEGGE

NOI PROF. On. Gr. Uff. Giuseppe Cardinali

RETTORE DELL'UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI ROMA

VEDUTI GLI ATTESTATI DEGLI STUDI COMPIUTI DALla

SIG.na Esterowicz Perela

FIGLIa DI Samuele NATa

A Wilna(1) (Polonia) ADDI' 15 agosto 1929

VEDUTO IL RISULTATO DELL'ESAME DI LAUREA DA Lei

SUPERATO IN QUESTA UNIVERSITA' ADDI' 31 luglio 1951

Le CONFERIAMO LA

LAUREA DI DOTTORE

IN CHIMICA

IL PRESENTE DIPLOMA DI LAUREA VIENE RILASCIATO
A TUTTI GLI EFFETTI DI LEGGE

DATO IN ROMA, ADDI' 23 agosto 1951

IL RETTORE
G. Cardinali

IL DIRETTORE AMMINISTRATIVO

IL PRESIDE DELLA FACOLTA'
Guido Bargellini

PARTENZA 336

N. MATRICOLA 25906

REPUBLIC of ITALY

Dean of the UNIVERSITY of ROME, prof.Giuseppe Cardinali

having seen the results of her studies and of the Doctoral Exam of July 31st, 1951, award to

Perela Esterowicz, daughter of Samuel, born in Wilno on August 15, 1929,

DOCTOR'S DEGREE in CHEMISTRY

This degree is being awarded under the laws of the state

Rome, August 23rd, 1951

After staying in Israel for seventeen days I delegeted the currency problem to my brother-in-law David, but without success. Since, as a Jew, I could not trade with the Arab countries, Weibul's concession was limited for me to Israel only. I returned to Rome and agreed to go to the United States.

The Congress of the United States passed a Displaced Person's Bill permitting an additional quota of 200 thousand refugees to immigrate to the U.S. Since the early 1920ties the immigration to the U.S. was regulated by special quota for each country. These quotas were the reason given by President Roosevelt for not permitting entry to the U.S. of the Jewish refugees from Germany. We were qualified to enter the U.S. according to this law (just to be on the safe side, we had registered before - this was the refugees law of self preservation, "cover all possible eventualities"). UNRRA provided the old Liberty ships to solve the question of transportation.

My daughter Perella was graduating with a doctor's degree in Chemistry in June of 1951. After she had already defended her thesis, she was suddenly notified that she could not graduate because her high school in Poland did not reply to the letter of inquiry of the Rome University's office. It appeared that the Milano office neglected to request from Poland the confirmation of her Matura when she enrolled there in 1946, and by 1951 the private high school was gone. They wanted her to get a certificate from the Polish consulate, verifying that she was indeed a graduate of a Polish high school. This was impossible - we had left Poland illegally. It was a tragedy, after five years of hard work no diploma!

Fortunately, her friend Vova Gdud advised her to go the former Polish Government's consulate at the Vatican. She did so and for a fee this consulate, which in reality had no ties with communist Poland, verified that indeed her Matura was valid, stamping it with a handsome seal. This seal was verified by the Vatican with another seal, the Vatican seal was certified by the Italian Foreign Ministry with another seal. After the verification of that by the Ministry of Education, she had a whole page of impressive seals verifying her Matura. The office was satisfied and she received her diploma.

After Rosa returned to Rome she went to visit the Weibuls in Sweden. There the Weibuls advised her to sell the two apartment houses that Zaks owned in West Berlin. They feared that Russia would soon overrun West Europe. This was another reason why they valued the late Zaks's work in creating the industrial complex in Brazil - they thought they might even have to leave Sweden. Rosa insisted that I had to go to Berlin to sell the houses before going to the U.S. Our UNRRA transport was leaving soon, and we would lose our free transportation if we missed our turn, but Rosa offered to buy private ship tickets for us if I would go to Berlin for her. I agreed, even though to do so I had to interrupt my stay with my brother David who came to visit us from Paris.

David had become a communist sympathizer and even intended to apply for Russian citizenship and go back to Russia. He had a very bad experience with capitalism in pre war years in Paris when he lost his bookkeeping job after 12 years of work and could not make a living (he had to be supported by me). We had many heated discussions about the merits of communism in which I could not convince him about the realities of life under communism. The only concession he made was to promise not to go back to the Soviet Union.

I went to Berlin for Rosa in August of 1951, flying from Rome to Hanover and then through the aerial corridor from Hanover to Berlin.

I arrived at the Berlin Templehof airport and found Berlin completely destroyed, the authorities were barely able to make the streets passable. One of the reasons for my visit was to check up on the rebuilding of Rosa's apartment house. I found the house rebuilt, but there was one fact I was not aware of: the contractors had not been paid for the work accomplished - Jacobs had pocketed the loan money. Rosa's attorney filed a suit for fraud against Jacobs but a biased judge found Jacobs innocent.
The houses were under rent control, thus Rosa was deprived of income since the debt to the contractors had to be paid. After looking at the houses and visiting many municipal offices I learned that the houses were unsaleable because the government had not yet established the worth in current marks of the mortgages taken out in pre Hitler times. I came back to Rosa empty handed.

We went to Bagnoli for verification of our worthiness to be admitted to the United States (no communist affiliations) We were interviewed and medically checked. The interviewer (probably from the intelligence service) asked me why is it that so many of the Russian communist leaders were Jewish. In response I pointed out that everybody knew about Trotski and Zinoviev, but very few realized that Uritski, the head of the Cheka in Leningrad after the departure of the government to Moscow, was killed by the Jewish student Kanegisser and that the assasination of Lenin was attempted by the Jewess Kaplan. Jews (city dwellers) were intellectually active on both sides of the barricade, both pro and anti-bolshevik.
The doctor found high blood pressure in Ida - we didn't quite know what that meant, thinking it may have had something to do with her Glaucoma - high intraocular pressure.

We left Italy from Naples on the commercial liner Atlantic on September 15th 1951. Our ship stopped in Genova and Nice, in Barcellona we were taken on a day trip to see the city and the models of different Spanish towns built for an exposition. We arrived in New York on September 29th. After the disembarkation procedures we were met by Doctor Elias Sedlis, Mrs Genia Zeldowicz, Mr Bromberg, Rosa's brother-in-law and Jasha Zondowicz, Mula Gerstein's brother-in-law from Mexico. Jasha, who was very involved in getting us well settled, advised us to stay in New York on our own, rather than go to Denver (for which we had the Joint affidavit, assuring us of temporary support). Jasha offered me a hundred dollars guaranteed support as his business representative in New York, he also phoned the Gersteins in Mexico and made them give us another hundred dollars a month. We checked into the modest hotel Oxford on 109th street, near the Sedlises, and then found two rooms in a private apartment on 116th street, close to the Columbia University campus.

At this opportunity I would like to mention the impressions that the first glance at the United States had made upon us.
Manhattan (where we settled) was well planned, with the streets going in the east - west direction and the Avenues going north - south, but many buildings (apart from the skyscrapers) were very ugly, with the fire escape staircases crawling up their sides. The streets were dirty and extremely crowded, with lines of cars parked at the curb; during rush hour movement was impossible. There were also many slums. The people seemed oddly dressed in garish colours, with pictures of women painted on men's ties.
We were surprised at the wasteful abundance of paper used as packing material - in contrast to Italy, where we had to bring a piece of newspaper to the market to wrap our purchases.

In overcrowded Italy it was impossible to be awarded citizenship and with it the right to work; even in France, with their negative population growth, my brother David had to renew his work permit frequently and, after living in Paris for forty years, he was never awarded French citizenship and died a foreigner.
In contrast, in the United States the newcomer received the right to work immediately and after five years of residence was awarded the full rights of citizenship.
We were pleasantly surprised when we were told by the English teacher of the neighbourhood evening school: "You should not feel discouraged, it is you, you the newcomers who have built the United States!" He was very encouraging toward his pupils and, when I had complained (in German) that at my age I had less learning ability than did the young people, the teacher rejoined: "You are wrong, you have the same abilities as the young, but they do not have your worries".
Brought up on Harriet Beecher Stowe "Uncle Tom's cabin" we were shocked to find not the good natured Uncle Tom, but blacks full of rage and hatred of the whites, the majority of whom had not contributed to the injustices done to them.

Jasha Zondowicz introduced us to his cousins, Doctor and Mrs Stolarski who were very kind and hospitable to us. I found an old friend, Mike Bachman who tried unsuccessfully to get a job for Perella with the American Cyanamide Company. Mrs Stolarski found in the New York Times a "help wanted" ad for a chemist. Perella applied and was hired by Doctor Bodanski of the Sloan Kettering Institute for Cancer Research for a position carrying the very modest salary of 185 dollars a month. Added to the 200 dollars from Mexico it gave us enough for a modest living.

In December the Sedlises learned that an apartment was being vacated in the apartment house where they lived, at 527 West 110th street.
They helped us in getting it (we paid a 100 dollars commission to the administrator). We were able to buy some sturdy used furniture from Mrs Nelson, our 116th street landlady. The big, round dining room table we are still using now. The transportation of the furniture was more costly than the purchase. Ida's unerring taste made her appreciate the possibilities of the apartment's round dining room - its wood was painted over, but she got it restored until it was a delight to eat there.
Our moving into an apartment next to the Sedlises was one of the best things that have ever happened to us - our friendship flowered. Mrs Genia Zeldowicz became Ida's close friend and Mila and Alik are the kindest and most supportive people in the world.

A son (Steven) was born to Mila and Alik Sedlis in February of 1952. Both Alik and Mila were able to continue their residencies in Cumberland Hospital thanks to Mila's Mother, Mrs Zeldowicz (Pani Genia) who took over the care of the baby while also doing the housekeeping. At that time the hospital residents had to work inhumanly long hours almost without pay ($ 50 per month). Doctor Elias Sedlis was unable to work because of a severe cardiac condition. Gabik Sedlis did not complete his studies of architecture in Italy, he was accepted to the prestigious Harvard School of Architecture. Zbigniew Brzezinski had been Gabik's roommate in Harvard. The family Sedlis lived in New York since 1949 on the $30,000 which doctor Sedlis had transferred (illegally) from Poland before the war. When, as newcomers, we first entered their apartment, we were struck by its "luxurious beauty" (when the Sedlises moved to a new apartment ten years later they discarded all the furnishings, except for the rugs).

Perella's childhood friend, Mira Jedwabnik, came to the United States in the fall of 1939 when her parents took her to the New York World Exposition. Fortunately, they got "stuck" there and Mira had a normal girlhood. Mira visited Perella in Rome in 1949 and was very supportive of us after our arrival in New York. As an artist, an enamel designer, she had discounts in many stores and helped us with getting a chandelier for the dining room.
Mira's father, Doctor Jedwabnik, had inherited real estate from his brother Abraham. They lived in a bautiful apartment in one of his houses situated next to the famous Russian Tearoom restaurant near the Carnegie Hall. At the Jedwabnik's we met the parents of Mira's boyfriend John, the prizewinning poet prof. Mark Van Doren and his wife Dorothy.
Subsequently we spent our first seder in the United States as guests of the Jedwabnik family.

I came from Italy to New york with 2600 dollars, mostly the Joint severance pay. Our apartment rent was $100, a rather large sum for people in our modest circumstances. We spent $ 1000 on the renovation of the apartment and the acquisition of the very basic furniture: some beds and a dinette set.
Without knowledge of English my prospects of getting a job were dim. Since an accounting course was part of my German Business School (Handelshochschule) curriculum, and bookkeeping didn't require much English, I wanted to get acquainted with the American system of bookkeeping. With the help of Aufbau, the German Jewish weekly newspaper which had an employment department, I got some part time work with a private accountant, a Russian Jew who payed me one dollar an hour; I had to walk to 137th street every evening. This gave me an income of 20$ a week, but more importantly I acquired the certainty that the American bookkeeping was based on the same principles as the European one, the so called "double entry".

While working at Sloan Kettering my daughter realized that her Italian preparation, while strong in theory, had not given her sufficient practical laboratory experience. This made her adaptation to the American laboratory requirements difficult. Possibly because of this strain she had a relapse of her thyroid condition and in February of 1952 had to give up her Sloan Kettering position.
At the same time my wife began to bleed vaginally. Doctor Elias Sedlis, (who had been her physician in Wilno, had delivered Perella and treated her like one of his family) did his best but did not succeed in stopping the bleeding. He diagnosed a uterine tumor which had to be surgically removed. After the surgery I went through terrible moments until it was established that the tumor was a benign fibroid. Since we had no medical insurance, I had to cover the cost of hospitalization and the surgical fee of Doctor Waltman. This absorbed almost all the money we had left. In addition, I lost the 20$ a week when the accountant Freeman fired me immediately after hearing about all our family difficulties.

My position as the New York representative of Jasha Zondowicz turned out to have been fictional - as a matter of fact it was just Jasha's kind financial support for us, unearned by me. This was a burden on my mind, because while I felt entitled to Mula's help, having supported him and his family in the ghetto and the H.K.P. camp, Jasha didn't owe me anything.

In the face of these tragic financial circumstances, I went to the Aufbau employment division looking for bookkeeping work. They said that they only had available an extremely low paying job (45$ a week) but I told them that my situation was so bad that I would accept any work.
When they offered financial help to me (an employee took me into a separate room, asked me to fill out a special application saying that they wanted to help me, that was what they were there for and that everybody started life in America this way) I knew that I needed their help, but I just couldn't take it. I refused it with tears in my eyes.

At the same time I turned to U.S.N.A. (a Joint office for help for New Americans), asking for help with my wife's medical expenses - such expenses overwhelmed the normal budget and we had no medical insurance. They humiliated me by checking in a very unpleasant way on whether I was indigent enough to qualify for their help. This offensive treatment compelled me to withdraw my request for aid and ask them to find me a bookkeeping job instead. They did find me a job as a full charge bookkeeper with Mc Tysla, a wholesale electrical appliance business with the main office on South street, and several retail stores. The job carried a salary of $65 for a five and a half day week. I worked hard, my eight hour days (except for Saturday, when I worked four hours) were very strenuous. I tried very hard to keep this job, which I found with so much difficulty - everywhere else the first question was: "Do you have any American experience?" and nobody would consider me without it.

The main partner of Mc Tysla, a Jew named Tischler, (the son of a bootlegger saloonkeeper) was driving around in a Cadillac and was a member of the board of directors of a big synagogue on 23rd street.
Since I couldn't speak English, we communicated in Yiddish. Tischler was satisfied with my work and authorized me to sign checks in one of his subsidiaries. My only point of friction with Tischler was his demand that I should work overtime without pay - this I refused to do after eight hours of exhausting work.

Tischler used to taunt me: "Sam, you are a lost soul - you have lost your money. Paul (his salesman) here also went bankrupt". Upon my rejoinder "Why do you compare me to Paul, after all I am the victim of the Nazi's", Tischler used to reply: "That makes no difference, you are bankrupt too".
When I asked him whether he was sure that he would have preserved his money in my circumstances, he answered " of course".
"You are mistaken", I told him "you would have lost not only your money, but your life as well."

Tischler was supposedly impressed when I showed him my Berlin Business School diploma, but my higher education did not deter him from ordering me: "Sam, go bring me a sandwich".
This order, which transformed me into his messenger boy was for me (with my European upbringing) an unbearable offense. But at that moment, considering the hard realities of the difficulty of getting a job without the so-called "American experience" on one hand and the sick wife and daughter on the other, I accepted the humiliation and brought him the sandwich.

That night I came home desperate. I went with my wife to Riverside Drive park, where we considered what the choices for getting out of this unbearable situation could be.
This situation was defused when Charlie Whelty, the office manager, seeing my distress offered to bring the sandwiches for Mr. Tischler.

In April of 1952 Perella recovered and found a position with E.F. Drew in water scale analysis - much less demanding work, so much so that she started to hope for more challenge.
Perella loved one man only - Vova Gdud. In the Casa dello Studente other students were interested in her but she chose Vova and stuck with her choice.

When she stayed with us in Grotta Ferrata while Vova was in Torino, we introduced Milo, a handsome young dentist from Rumania to her. Milo fell in love with Perella, drove her around Rome on his motorcycle and wanted to marry her. When in the summer of 1952 Perella went with Mira and Dora and Samek Wulc, her friends from Casa dello Studente to Scroon Lake in upstate New York, Milo came there to see her again. In New York our friends from Wilno, introduced their son to her and were very eager for a match, but Perella wasn't interested.

Vova came back to the United States in April of 1952 (he had to come to the US prematurely when his visa came due in 1950 but went back to Italy to finish his medical education) and started his Internship in the St. Elisabeth Hospital in Elisabeth, New Jersey. It was a very difficult time for him both because, (like Perella) he found his Italian preparation inadequate and because of the inhumanly long hours.
Perella was very understanding when he was too tired to come to visit her and would fall asleep at our table when he did come. Vova was reluctant to become engaged, being afraid of the responsibility. My wife felt very bad for our daughter.
One weekend Vova was supposed to come to Perella for a special celebration which they were planning for weeks. When he failed to come for a couple of hours Perella called him at the hospital - when it appeared that Vova had forgotten the whole occasion, Perella broke the relationship. Vova decided that he did not want to lose Perella, came with a camelia corsage and asked her to marry him.

They were married on June 7th, 1953, in a temple at 110th street across the street from our house. Mira and Dora were Maid and Matron of Honor, Mila and Alik acompanied Vova to the altar. Vova wore a tuxedo borrowed from my relative Sheniuk, Perella spent almost a month's salary on a beautiful wedding gown from Bonwit Taylor. It was a very delightful occasion, modest in respect to the refreshments offered but rich in its joyous mood. All our friends were there, also all the Casa dello Studente people who lived around New York.
The ceremony was performed in the conservative 110th str. synagogue by Rabbi Serebranik (born in Bobruisk, graduated as Doctor of philosophy in Vienna). In his moving speech the Rabbi expressed his delight at being able to unite two people who recently had miraculously escaped from death's clutches, to build a happy new life together.
This mood of celebration of victory of life over death communicated itself to all those present - they predominantly were also survivors of the Holocaust. Rabbi Serebranik said that for him Perella was the enchanting personification of the words of the prayer extolling the beauty of the bride. Indeed, Perella looked very lovely, shining with the happiness of being united to the man she loved.

Perella and Vova spent their one week's honeymoon at the same inexpensive Arowhead Lodge on Scroon lake in which Perella spent her vacation the year before. The newlyweds wanted to extend their stay but Perella's new employer, the Ideal Toy Company, wouldn't grant her an unpaid leave of absence. (Perella left E.F Drew in the beginning of 1953, even though they

offered her the position of Senior Chemist, to take this supposedly more interesting work in plastisol formulation of the dolls at Ideal Toy Co - this was a mistake she would regret since they fired her in the fall of 1953 after she became pregnant).
The newlyweds stayed with us and in the fall I became the only provider since after working during the summer in the Emergency Room of Lincoln Hospital, Vova had to take a year's course at the New York University Medical School to become eligible for the New York State Board. He took the course with Mila Sedlis, (Mila was pregnant at that time).

The Mac Tysla partners were fighting and in the beginning of 1953 the business was liquidated. Mr. Laskowicz, the C.P.A., appreciated my work and found me a position as head bookkeeper with a better salary, ($75 for a five day week) with another enterprise he serviced, the Helen Neuschafer Corporation in College Point, N.Y..

Mrs Neuschafer, once a beautiful office girl who married the boss, now as his widow was the possessor of a fortune consisting of a multimillion estate at the sea shore in Rye, N.Y., a nailpolish factory "Laquerite" situated in New Jersey and a plant in College Point where the nailpolish was bottled. Lipsticks, nailpolish remover and other cosmetics were also produced at College Point.
We shared our factory building with the Belock Co., an electronics enterprise in which Mrs Neuschafer was the vice president, the main shareholder and owner of its preferred stock.
"Helen Neuschafer" was a nationally distributed brand, sold in the 5 & 10 stores (Woolworth, Grants etc.) all over the U.S.. Unofficially, we even supplied nailpolish in barrels to "Avon", the largest cosmetics enterprise in the U.S. and bottled nailpolish for the famous French parfumerie of "Coty" under their label.

Mrs Neuschafer, a woman in her early fifties, still showed traces of her former beauty. She personally ran her enterprise but had one great weakness: she was a victim of alcoholism - at 8 AM she was already drunk.
The office personnel in College Point consisted of, besides myself and the manager, of more than ten office girls.
These office girls (all of them high school graduates) were surprisingly ignorant in matters of the western cultural heritage, even though the United States was the principal defender of this heritage.
They knew all about the movie stars and the hit tunes of the day, but had never heard about the French Revolution and its anthem, the Marseillaise, knew nothing about the great European literature, and abhorred classical music. There were almost no points of common interest for myself and these American girls, no topics for conversation.
I decided that their ignorance must have been caused by the American education system when a girl from Chile (South America), a graduate of a high school which used a European curriculum, was employed in our office. With this young girl I was able to discuss Beethoven, Tolstoy and Dostoyevski.
Soon after I had joined the firm the office manager position became available; with the help of Mr Laskowicz I successfully arranged for this position to be given to Charlie Welty, my former manager at Mac Tysla (I remembered his kindness during the so-called "sandwich incident").

At the time of our arrival we were surprised to find out that President Truman, the initiator of the Marshall Plan and of the Atlantic Alliance (NATO), (about whom Churchill had said he knew of no one else who had contributed so much to the preservation of the free world) was not popular among the

American people. The popularity of President Truman was at its lowest point in 1951. As we know, it required more than one decade for the majority of historians to acknowledge that Truman belonged to the greatest American Presidents of this century.

In contrast to the admirable, generous and farsighted United States foreign policy (which was amazing to us, since the European foreign policy was based on power rather than justice and generosity), the conditions inside the United States were entirely different. There was lots of corruption in both the City and Federal Governments and in the Labor Unions. What was worse, the majority of the American public accepted as fact that " politics is a dirty business".

I would like to illustrate this with the following experience: once I returned from work on the subway with the Helen Neuschafer real estate broker Mr. Golden. When the latter heard that I was a newcomer to the United States, originally from Russia, he told me: "You probably know by now that in the United States all the government officials, starting with the President down to the cop on the corner are all crooks?"

When, amazed by this statement I asked him: "Was President Roosevelt a crook too?" he answered: "Of course, through Harry Hopkins and his own son Elliott who misappropriated the funds of the "March of Dimes" (a charitable organization).

When next day I told Charlie Welty about my experience with Golden, Charlie answered: "I am afraid that he is right". I was aghast: "How can you elect four times a dishonest man to the office that gives him the power to demand the lives of your husbands and sons?" he answered: "We had no choice, the other would be worse". At this moment the assistant to the C.P.A. Laskowicz, who witnessed our conversation, said "With this hand I signed a check for $6000 for President Roosevelt". I replied: "I could admit the possibility that President Roosevelt could be dishonest, but I exclude that he could be an idiot too". Now I understand that the check must have been an election campaign contribution.

Interestingly, when I was critical about the filth on the sidewalk and the entrance yard around our factory, I was told that as a newcomer I had no right to criticize the United States (here the same people who called their president a crook denied me the right of criticizing the state of the sidewalks).

Turning to the world events in the years after our arrival to the United States, during 1952 the Korean war went on with the participation of China. 1952 was an American election year. I remember that the speeches of the Democratic Presidential candidate, the Governor of Illinois Adlai Stevenson evoked my deepest admiration both as to content and to form. In contrast, those of the Republican candidate, General Eisenhower were full of demagoguery: "I'll go to Korea to bring our boys home"! while it was clear to everybody, (including himself) that to achieve this one had to go to Moscow, not to Korea. To my great surprise I learned that the results of a presidential election were not decided by the abilities of the candidates (leadership, experience), but rather by their appearance and marital status - a divorced man had little chance of becoming a president.

Since U.S. was the only industrial country who emerged unscathed from the World War and had the neccessary funds to invest in research and development and to attract the best minds from abroad, it was the dominant supplier of goods to the world, having little competition.

The relation of the dollar to other currencies was determined for many years to come in 1944 by the international agreement of Breton Wood. The international accounts could be settled by dollars as well as by gold (there was 20 billion dollars worth of gold in Fort Knox).

The cycles of the capitalist economy were flattened, (but not eliminated) by president Roosevelt's social insurance reforms.

The Full Employment Act promulgated by president Truman in 1946 set the priorities - if you had to choose between a stable dollar and full employment the latter had the priority, keeping the wheels of the industry rolling. The overheated demand for goods (in connection with the Korean war) was curbed not by the raising of interest rates but by credit restrictions.

The absence of competition and the high productivity permitted the Labor Unions to achieve high wages for the American worker.

This favorable situation would end in the latter fifties, when the United States had to meet on the world markets the competition of the other industrial powers who in the ten years managed to build modern industries possessing a high level of technology and operating at a significantly lower cost of labor (but let us not skip too far ahead).

Our life in New York revolved around the Wilno "Landsmandshaft" - our contact with our roots in the "Old Country".

The Jewish immigration into the United States arrived in three waves.

The first wave, at the turn of the century, consisted mostly of the masses from the poor, overcrowded "shtetl" and preserved Yiddish as their everyday language. These people belonged to the Jewish socialist party "Bund", part of the "Arbeiterring". Abe Kahn, the head editor of "Forverts" (Forward), the main Yiddish newspaper of the "Bund" party, had come to the United States from Wilno in the 1890ties.

The second wave after the first World War consisted mostly of assimilated, Russian speaking Jews. The aim of their group "Friends of Wilno" was to help the Jewish remnants in Europe. It was liquidated during and after the second World War.

The third wave were we, the Holocaust survivors. We ended up creating two separate Wilno groups.

The first, "Nusach Wilno" consisted of the Yiddish speaking adherents of the socialist "Bund", headed by Lazar Epstein, Chaim Pupko and the former communist Leiser Ran. They were hostile to the Zionist ideals and the State of Israel. "Nusach's" main goals were the preservation of the Yiddish schools, theater and literature. After our arrival to New York I joined "Nusach Wilno" and was elected vice president. When (as the last point on my program) I proposed that we should support the building of the state of Israel, my proposal was indignantly rejected by the membership: "Go to the Zionists!"

We left and created a separate association whose main goal was helping with the building of an independant Jewish state in Israel (as survivors of the Holocaust we knew how indispensable that was) and the support of the survivors who were not settled yet. Being unable to punish the killers of our Jewish children we felt it our duty to honor, show appreciation and support those Gentiles who saved Jews at the risk of their own lives. For instance, we gave monthly support to the heroic Lithuanian lady, Ms Shemaite, who at that time was in Paris without any means of support.

During the first founding meeting of the newly created society "United Wilno", which took place under my chairmanship, Dr. Jedwabnik was nominated as President, Albert Etingen and Victor Chelem as vice Presidents and I as Chairman of the Board.

Simultaneously, to garner funds for the realization of our projects a woman's committee was created headed by my wife Ida, Sonia Etingen, Maria Chelem and with Ludmila Hearst as financial secretary. To supplement the yearly membership dues, the committee organized yearly social affairs enlivened by musical appearances of artists. The committee published a memorial and advertising yearbook, the main source of our income.

The wives of our generation very seldom worked professionally, therefore their achievements in the committee gave them great satisfaction, fulfilling their desire of being useful and creative, rather than running around shopping in the department stores.

My previous work for the "Joint" in Italy convinced me that the sending of parcels (a favorite of the Landsmanshaftn) was not an appropriate assistance. These parcels were mostly appropriated by those least deserving of help who demanded it most stridently, (and would be sold on the black market at bargain prices) and deprived those who had not lost their self-respect. To be able to help out the latter (the most deserving), we founded a "Mutual help" loan fund in cooperation with the Israeli Wilno committee; this made it possible for us to select meritorious applicants and satisfy their needs, taking also into account their urgency. We also supported the Red Magen David (Jewish Red Cross) and ORT (Society for crafts instruction).

Most importantly, we realized that the Jewish trained brains were our greatest national asset which so far made it possible for us to survive in the uneven struggle against our foes - at that moment the Arabs outnumbered us a hundred to one and had the arms and the power of their oil riches.

We therefore established scholarships for students of the Haifa "Technion" and the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv Universities.

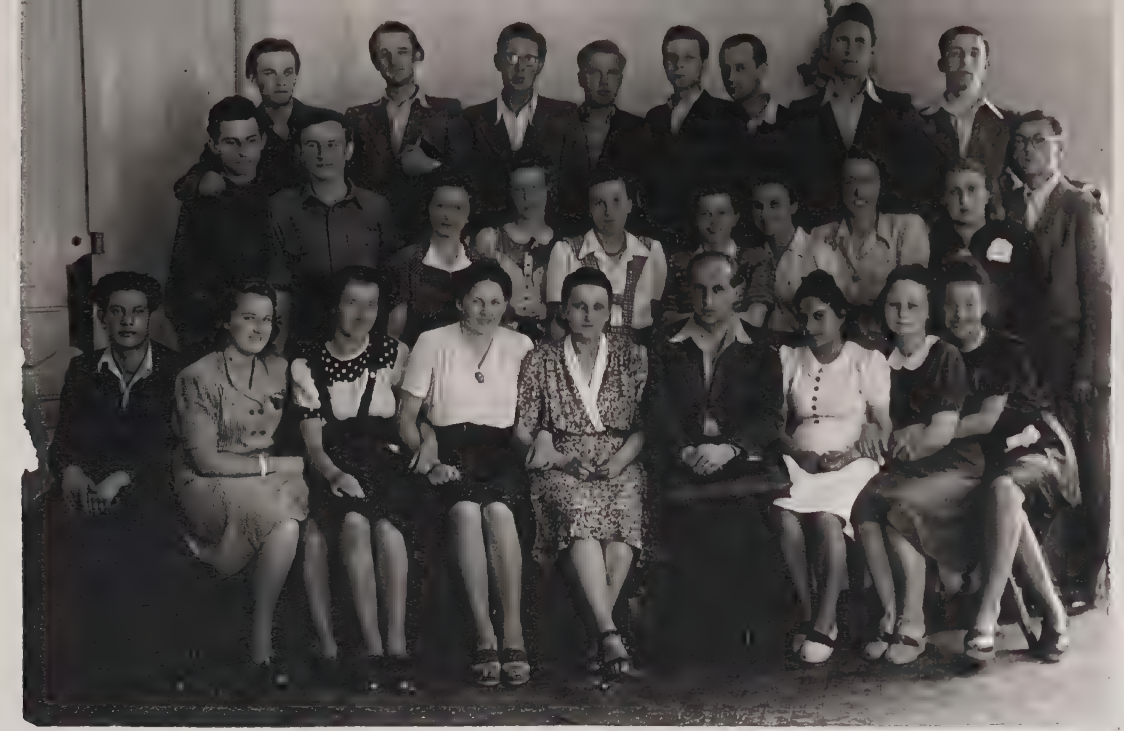
The members of the board of directors of "United Wilno" were very often in disagreement. Dr. Jedwabnik donated to our committee a parcel of land in Israel and insisted on building a home for the aged from Wilno on it - this was beyond the financial capabilities of a society of only one hundered members. It took two years to reconcile our plans with reality and accept my program of the above mentioned Mutual Loan Fund.

In the summer of 1953 my wife and I went to Cape Cod with our friends, the engineer Arik Malkiel (originally from Kowno) and his wife Genia. The Malkiels had been with us in H.K.P. before moving to the Kowno ghetto and ending up, he in Dachau, she in the camp in west Prussia. We used the Malkiel's Pontiac.

Vova, our son in law, thought of settling on the West Coast. As a foreign medical school graduate he had to apply for admission to each State Board separately (not an easy thing for California, it took Vova two years to comply with their ever mounting requirements). In June of 1954, after taking the New York State Board he went to California and succcessfully passed the State Board there, obtaining the right to practice.

In 1954, when vacationing on the upstate New York Schroon Lake, at the same Arrowhead Lodge where Perella and Vova had spent their honeymoon, we were unpleasantly surprised by our first experience of antiSemitism in the United States - the guests in the lodge abruptly became hostile when they learned that we were Jewish. I had been told by Jacob Weiman, a man from Wilno who lived in the U.S. since 1940, that socially the Gentiles would accept invitations from the Jews, but never reciprocate. At work however I did not feel any antiSemitism even though I was the only Jew . Mrs Neushafer always invited me with my wife to the Christmas parties at her estate in Rye, N.Y.

Soon after our return to New York, on July 7th, 1954 Perella gave birth to Leonard, a beautiful healthy son. Lenny was named after my Father Leiba. Since Dr. Kuntze, her obstetrician, was in a hurry to join a party at Jones beach, he applied the high forceps to accelerate the delivery leaving Perella



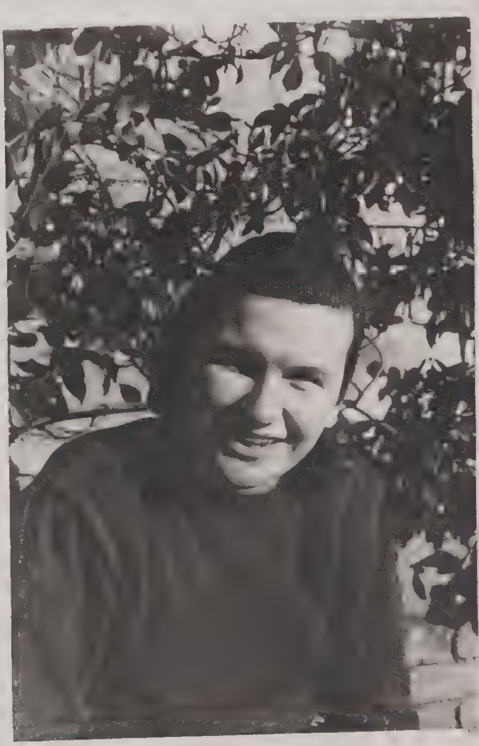
Graduating High School class 1946 Lodz, Poland
I'm in middle row, fifth from the left
the anti-Semitic chemistry teacher first row
fourth from right

High School friends
Lodz, Poland
1946 (white shirt)
middle

Excursion High School class
I'm second from right
Lodz Poland 1945-46

?

Italy ~1947



Italy ~1948

Samek Wulc, Vovka Gdud, circa 1946

Vovka Gdud, circa 1946

Perelka Esterowicz circa 194

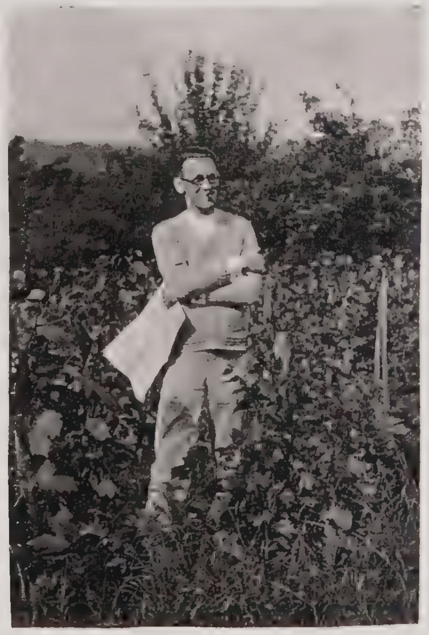
Jasha Brauns, Vovka Gdud

circa 1946

Perelka Esterowicz

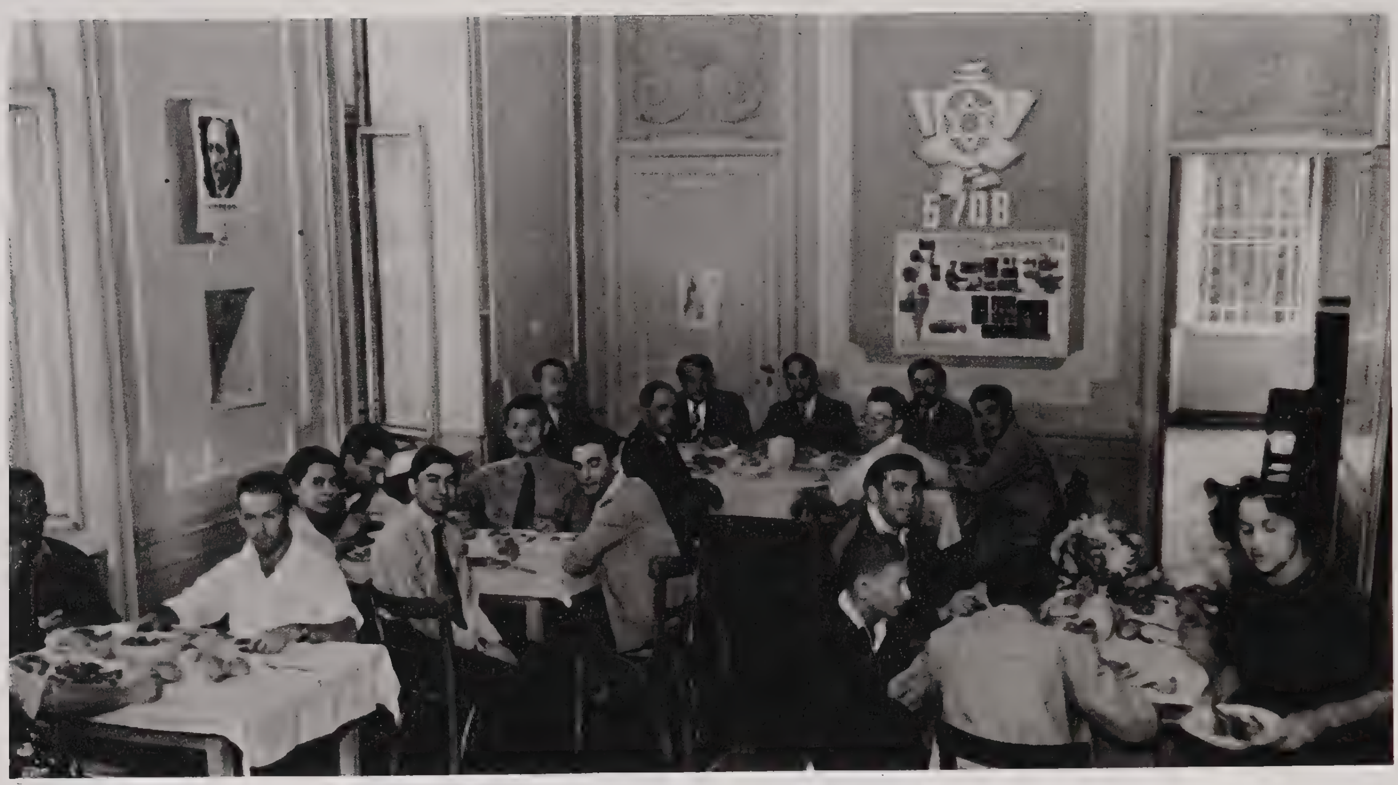
circa 1947

Perelka Esterowicz, Esia Israelit
Lodz, circa 1945

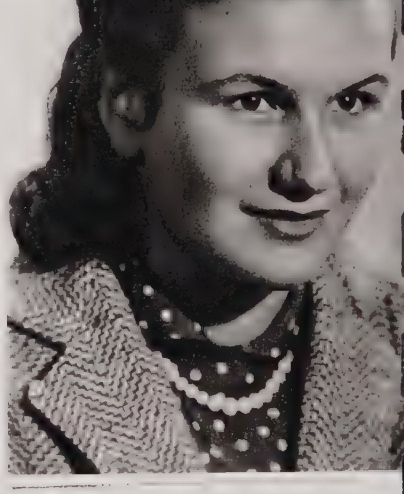


wid Esterowicz, circa 1950

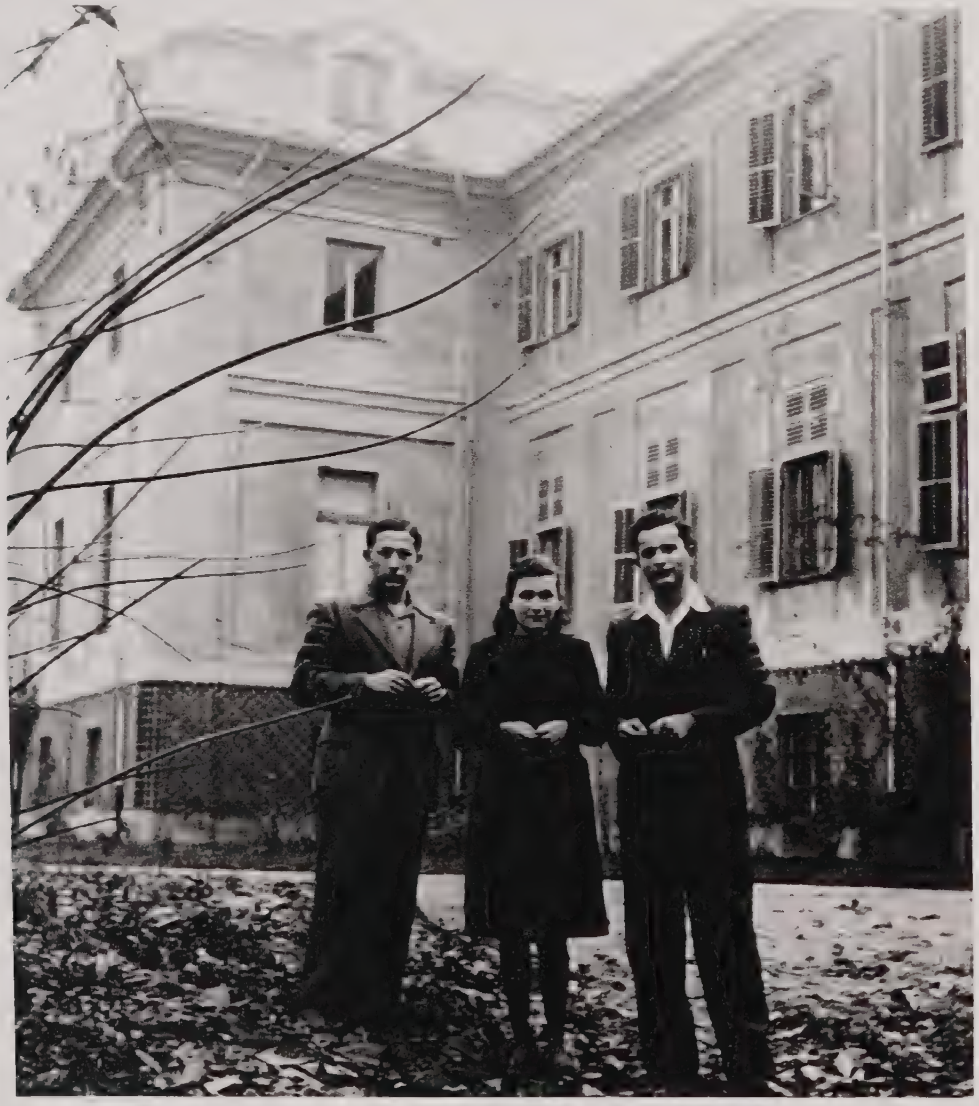
Gary Gerstein, circa 195



Casa dello Studente - Student Hostel dining room in 1948. From left, 1st table: Micha
Ceitin, Otto Shell, 2nd table, clockwise: Medi Hochberger, Nello Salomon, Davide Finzi,
Emanuel Shoenberg, Pereira. front of back table: administrators Kapise & Lesman, Pierre
Moravetz, I. Geleris. 4th table:
Marek Jablonko, Joseph Guthertz
Analiza (Zizi) Gersoni with plate
back of Ignas Presman

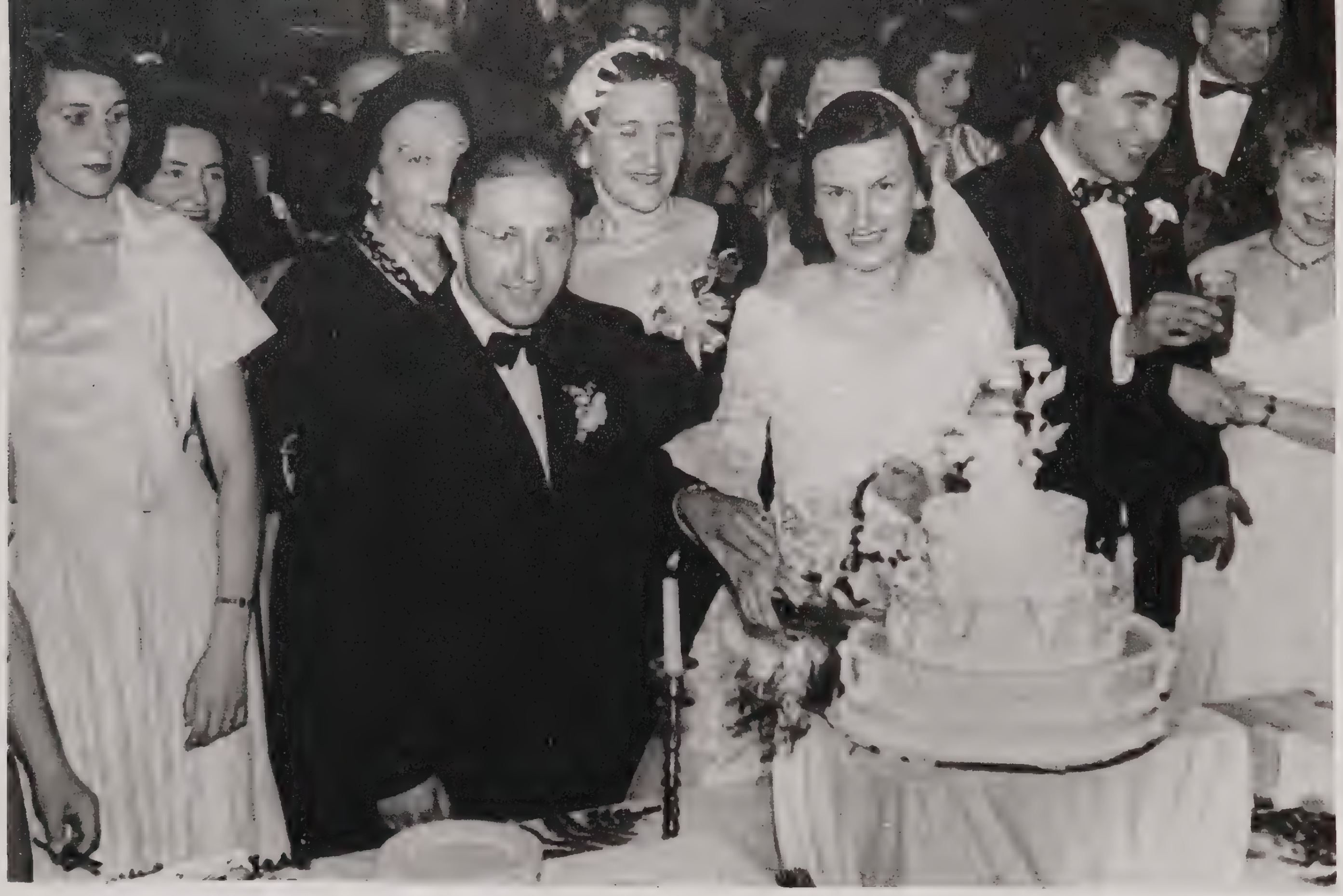


Perelka Esterowicz, 1950

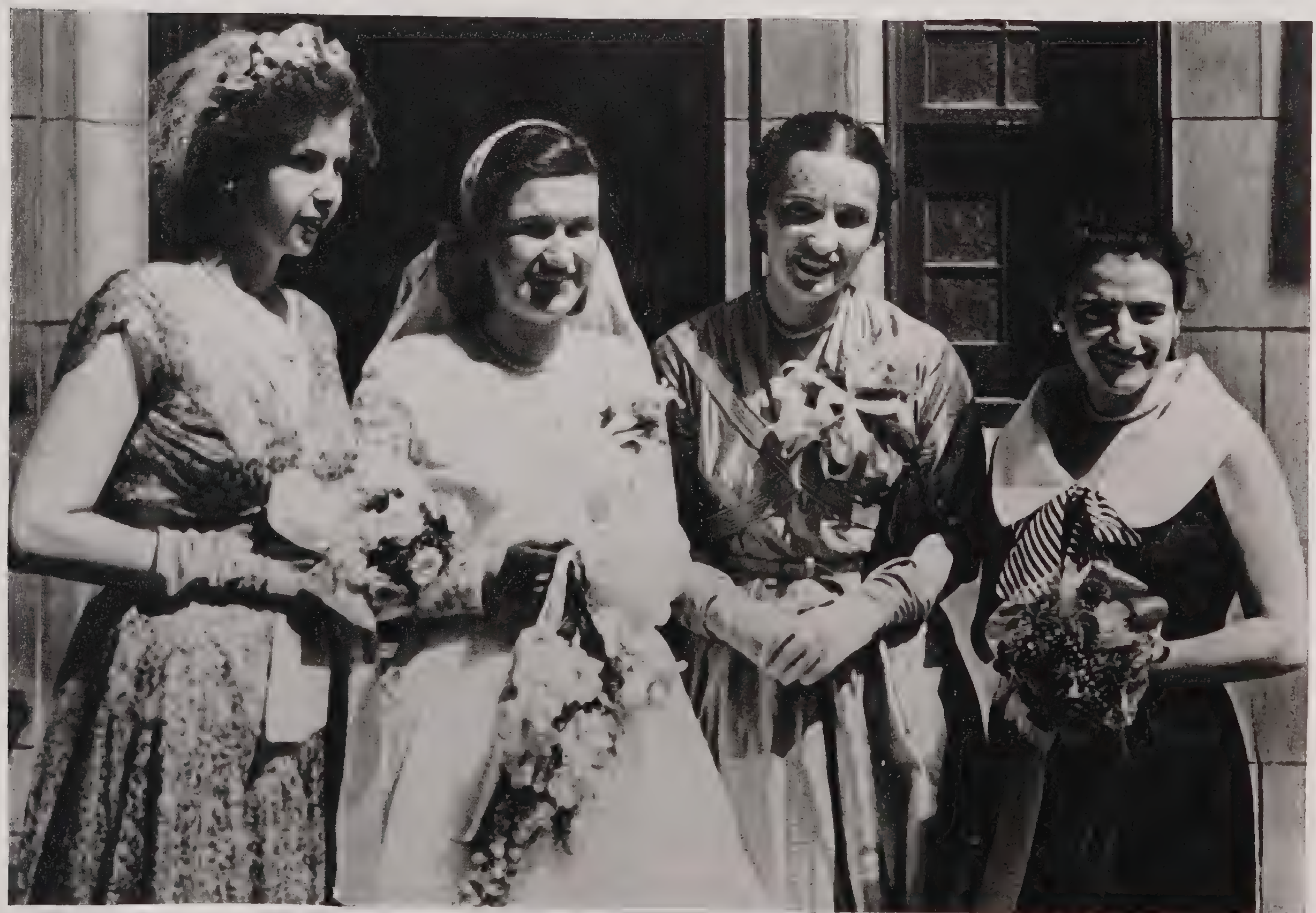


Vovka Gdud, Perelka Esterowicz, Bernard Roizman in front of student hostel in Turin, Italy. circa 1947

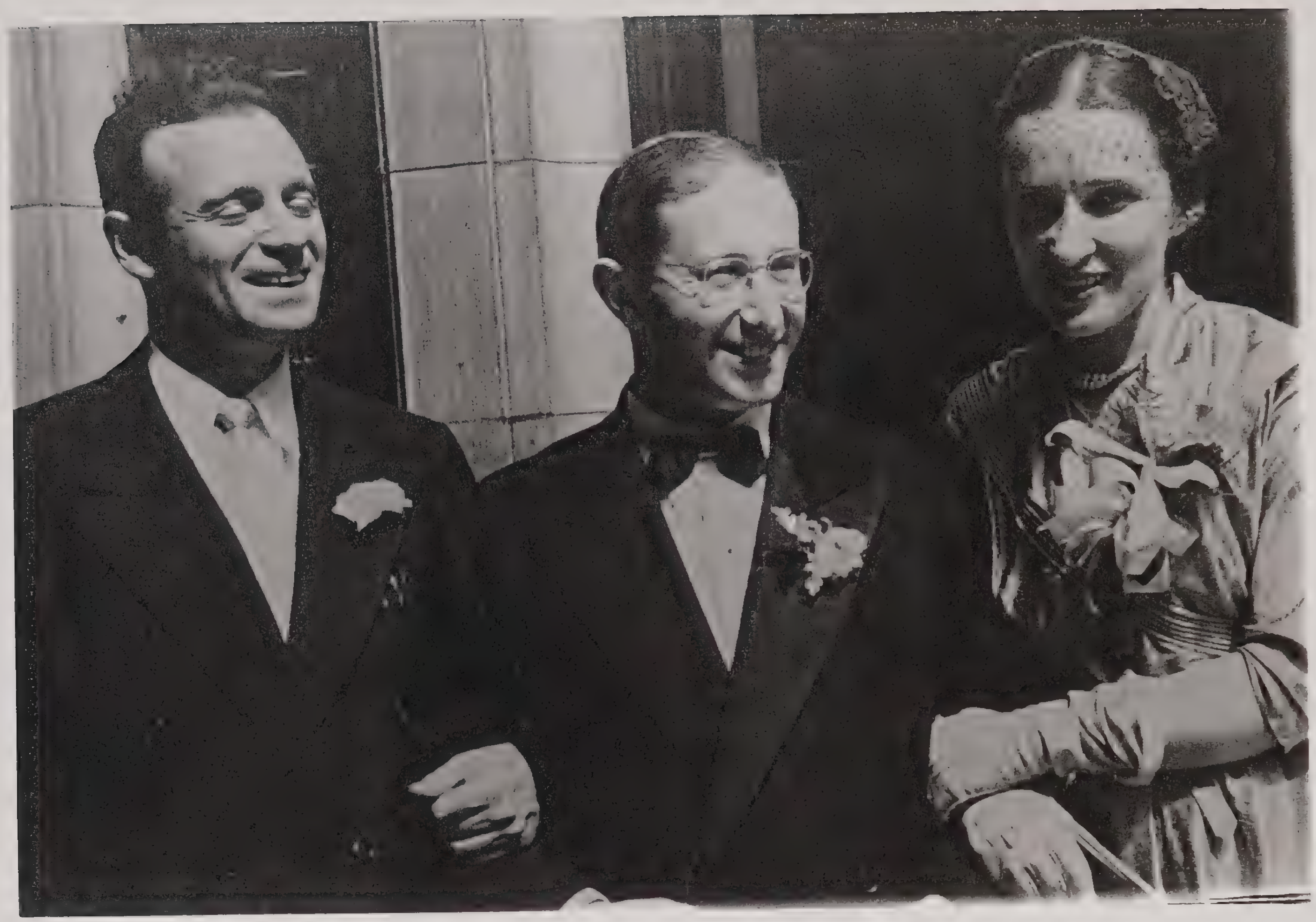
Vovka Gdud, 1950



Betty Roizman, Alina Presman,pani Genia Zeldowicz, the groom Vova Gdud, Ida Esterowicz, the bride Perella Esterowicz,Paul Geleris, Boma Genis Marilyn Geleris



bridesmaid Mira Jedwabnik, the bride Perella Esterowicz,Mila Sedlis, matron of honor Dora Wulc.



Best man Alik Sedlis, groom Vova Gdud, Mila Sedlis. June 7th, 1953

Vova, Lenny, Perelka Gdud, circa 1955

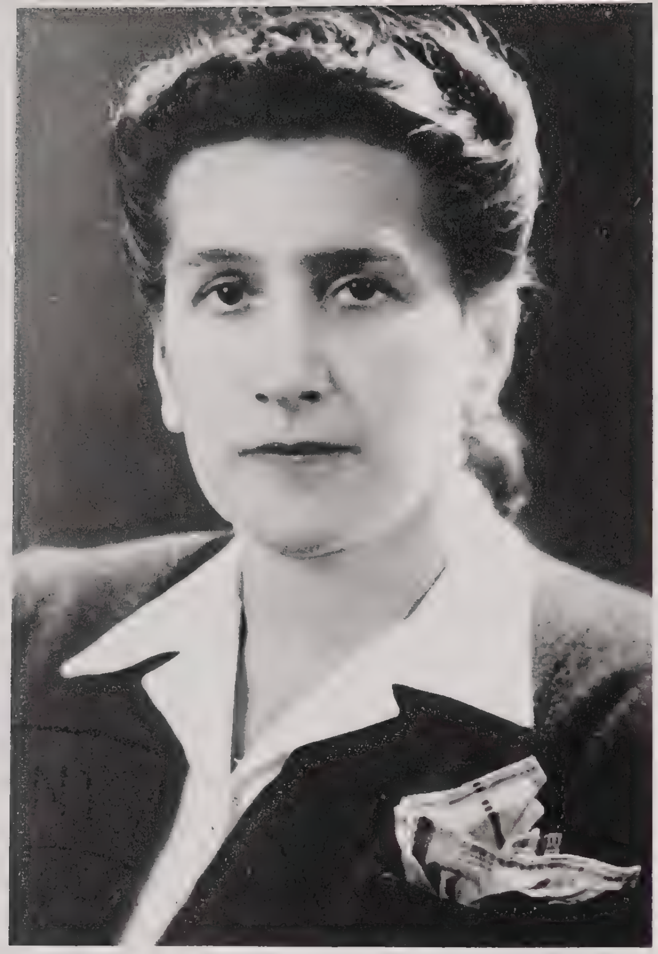
Mera & David Gerstein, circa 1950

Casa dello Studente students:Zilfen, (?) Ada Borychowska, Alina Presman, Joseph Guthertz, Perelka Esterowicz, Vovka Gdud, Alik Kremer cica 1947 Florence, Italy

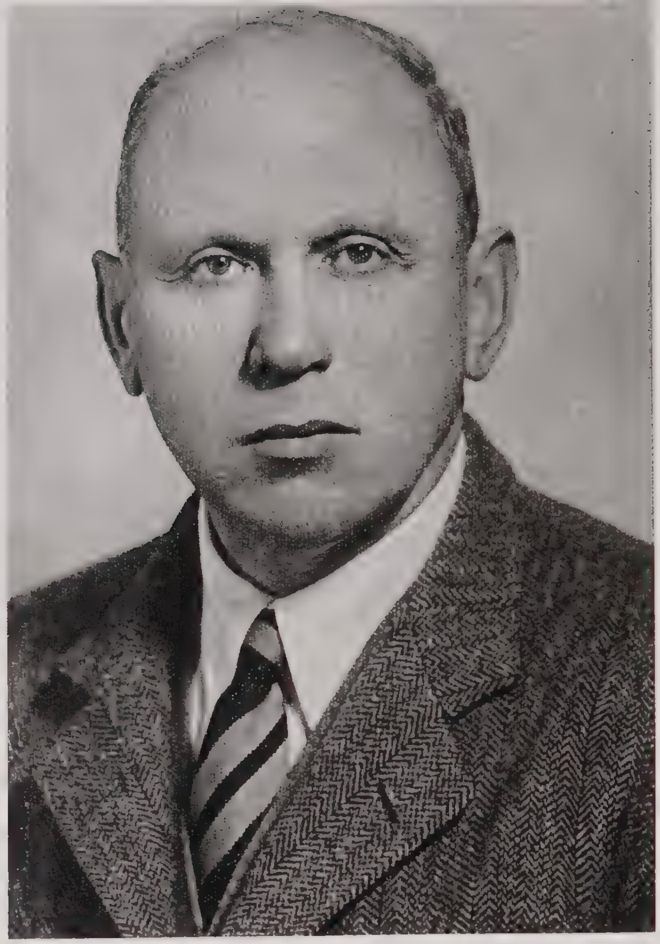
Ida & Samuel Esterowicz, Perelka and Vovka Gdud circa 1953 New York

Ida Esterowicz, circa 1956

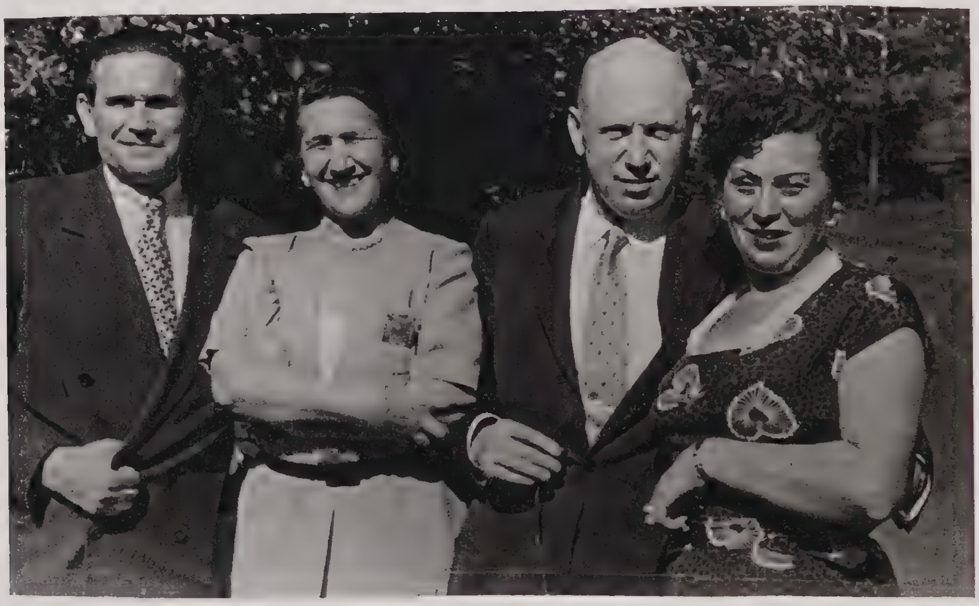
Ida & Samuel Esterowicz, circa 1962



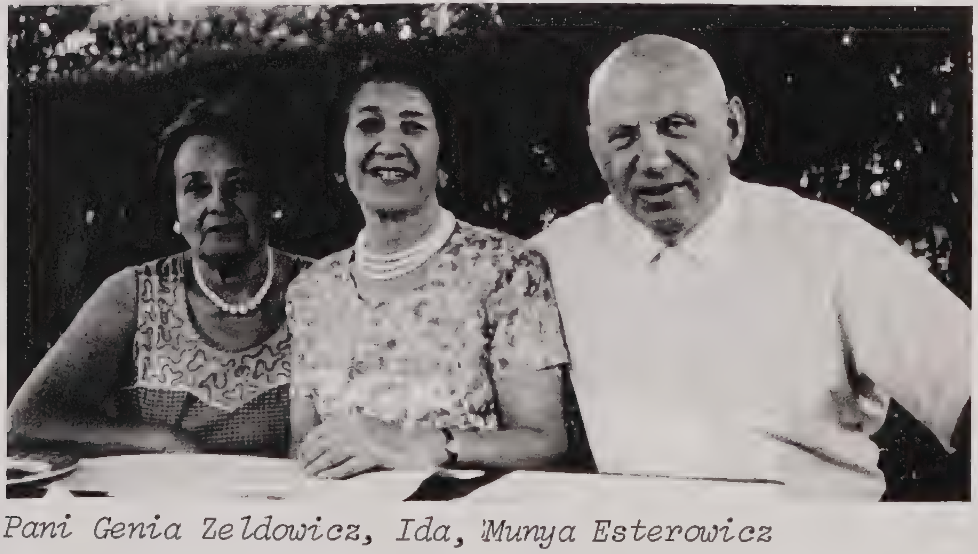
Ida Esterowicz, circa 1946



Samuel Esterowicz, circa 1953



Mula Gerstein, Ida & Munya Esterowicz, Nina Gerstein circa 1954



Pani Genia Zeldowicz, Ida, Munya Esterowicz traumtized and Lenny's face scraped. Mila Sedlis delivered their second son Danny by cesarean section on August 7th. Perella, Wowa and Lenny continued to live with us since Vova was doing an obstetrical residency at the Cumberland Hospital in Brooklyn and was paid $50 a month for a 80 hour week. Perella started working at St. Luke's Hospital clinical laboratory - by that time Lenny was weaned and the Hospital was across the street from our house. Of course, my wife was an extremely devoted grandmother, very helpful with Lenny's care. I have to admit that I accepted the title of Grandfather at the age of 57 with mixed feelings. The image of a grandfather was associated with great age for me - since I was the youngest son of the youngest daughter my Grandfather was 76 at the time of my birth.

In 1955 the West German government awarded idemnification for liberty deprivation to the surviving victims of Nazi persecution. The award was 150 DM ($1=4.2DM) for every month we were compelled to wear yellow patches, for the time spent in the ghetto and camps, until liberation. For our family that meant 36 months, about $1500 each. My wife was awarded a pension for loss of health. My son-in-law refused to accept the indemnification - he felt that blood could not be compensated with money.

I feel that the rest of the Esterowicz - Gdud tale should be recounted by Perella.

PERELLA CONTINUES THE MEMOIRS.
from 1956 on.

Our first California experience.
We decide to move to CA.
Sadness of separation.
Journey to CA.
We leave Lenny with my parents.
Establishing the office.
My work at the office.
My Mother brings Lenny to us.
Father's stock investments.
Birth of Anne and Michael.
Lenny resents the twins.
Vova's father, Rabbi Gdud and his wife Gita come to CA.
We build the house of our dreams.
I begin working at Pomona College.
Mike's reading.
Getting rid of the TV.
Anne's horses.
Israel's six day war in 1967.
Our visit to Israel in 1968.
My Israel Ulpan experience with the children in youth camps.
Lenny's Bar Mitzvah.
Rabbi Gdud's death in 1969.
The kids go to youth camps in Israel, we to Israel and Greece.
Lenny goes to Pomona College in 1971.
My parents move to CA in 1974.
Lenny gets admitted to Albert Einstein Medical School.
My mother's stroke.
Father begins the writing of his memoirs.
Anne gets admitted to Pitzer, Mike to U. of Redlands, then Occidental.
Mike gets the role of Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof.
Mother dies in July of 1975.
Mike gets thrown into jail in Mexico.
Mike decides to be a pre-med.
Father takes Anne to Russia in 1978.
Father's letter about the economy.
Father's letters to Nixon, Nixon's reply.
Lenny graduates from Einstein Medical School.
Mike is admitted to the Rochester Medical School.
Lenny starts pediatric residency in New York.
Our trip to England, we meet the Shubs in Spain.
Uncle David Gerstein dies in October 1979.
Father's prostatectomy.
We visit China in fall of 1980.
Lenny marries Stacy in 1981.
Father begins new investment strategy.
Father and I go to the Soviet Union, Wilno, Berlin in 1982.
Birth of Lenny's and Stacy's son Benjamin in 1982.
Father advises me on investments.
Father's metastatic cancer.

Mike graduates from Rochester Medical School in 1983.
Mike marries Sue in 1983.
Birth of Mike's and Sue's son Jonathan in 1984.
Father continues his interrupted memoirs in collaboration with me.
Anne goes to Ross U. Veterinary School in St. Kitts.
My Father dies in Jan. 1985.
Eulogies.
I start the translation of my father's memoirs.
Our trip to Israel, Italy in fall of 1985.
My breast cancer is discovered in Feb. 1986, chemotherapy started.
Lenny's and Stacy's son Jesse is born in October 1986.
Mike's and Sue's daughter Rebecca is born in March 1987.
Vova and I go to the Soviet Union, Wilno, see the ghetto, the H.K.P.,
visit the peasants who saved Vova during the Nazis.
My Commonweal cancer support workshop.
I honor my parents memory with a donation to Commonweal.
We visit Vovka's uncle Mula and his family in Argentina in Oct. 1987.
Our Alaska cruise.
We go to New York to Anne's graduation from Veterinary School.

APPENDIX
Father's essays and letters.

PERELLA CONTINUES:

In June of 1955 Vova and I went with Lenny to Los Angeles, California, where Vova served as a locum tenens of an Italian physician, Michele Vetri, who was visiting Italy for three months. When we came back to New York in October, we started to look for an opportunity to settle in Queens or in upstate New York - as was the earnest desire of myself and of my parents since we dreaded the thought of separation.

Unfortunately we did not find an acceptable place and sadly we had to accept Vova's decision to settle in California.

We bought our first car, but since we did not have the required down payment we not only had to borrow all my parent's meager savings and take a loan from our kind friends, the Erlichs, but my father even had to take out a personal loan from the bank. Deciding to cross the continent by car, we temporarily left Lenny with my parents - my mother was the most loving and devoted guardian of her very lively grandson.

We started our journey in the middle of January, 1956. After investigating the opportunities all over Los Angeles, Vova opened a medical office as a solo general practitioner in La Puente, a small town east of Los Angeles, with me as a receptionist - we were both very inexperienced.

When patients could not pronounce the name Gdud and even the pharmacist called saying that there must be a misprint on the prescription, we changed our name from Gdud to Good, a thing that we regret to this day.

Our friends from the student home, Jasha Brauns, a surgeon, and Paul Geleris, a pathologist, moved also to California and settled near us with Vova's help.

After we bought a refrigerator for our rented house we felt established well enough to call my mother asking her to bring Lenny to us in April. After the three month separation Lenny did not recognize me as his mother, calling me "auntie". My mother stayed with us through the summer, taking care of Lenny while I worked in the office. When father finally protested that he needed his wife with him, mother reluctantly had to leave for New York. My mother could never reconcile herself to the separation from myself and my family - even though they spent their vacations in California she remained broken hearted.

Father believed very strongly in the future of the steel industry and invested his meager savings in it. When we visited my parents with the children in 1959, upon the advice of my father we invested in the stock of Wheeling Steel the first money which we had after the paying back of our debts.

After father retired in 1962, he concentrated all his energies on his stock investments, even putting into stocks the money my mother had received from the Germans as reparation for the damage that her eyes sustained in the ghetto. He did this against mother's strenuous protests, since their financial situation was not easy - to the detriment of their relationship.

In 1957 I worked in Vova's office until just a couple of weeks before the birth of our twins - Anne and Michael. Anne was named in memory of Vova's late mother, Chana. The twins were sweet tempered children who entertained each other.

Their "intrusion", however, was hard for Lenny to accept. Since I had tried to prepare him for the coming of his siblings telling him that they were "his babies", after a couple of months he asked me: "Are the babies mine?" "Yes, of course, darling, they are yours." I answered.

"OK," he said then "I don't want them, take them back to the hospital!"

The happiness of the following beautiful years of their childhood was slightly clouded for me by Lenny's tyranny over Mike. He did not resent Anne as much and moreover she was hardier, better able to stand up to her older brother. Mike adored Lenny and followed him faithfully whenever he was permitted to do so.

Lenny was a beautiful, charming and very intelligent child. He was very stoic against physical pain, but very sensitive to any emotional hurt. Lenny had been promoted from first to third grade since he was ahead of his classmates.

Vova's father, Rabbi Dov Ber Gdud and his stepmother Gita Borovski came to us from Israel in the fall of 1958; we prevailed upon them to remain near us. My father-in-law became the rabbi of congregation Bnei Jacob, once large but now depleted because of the exodus of the Jews to San Fernando valley.

Rabbi Gdud had bloody stools for four years - he had multiple Barium enemas and sigmoidoscopies which missed his colon tumor, it was finally excised in 1965, after it had already invaded the full thickness of the sigmoid colon wall.

After the surgery, while barely awake from the anesthesia, his father demanded from Vova the whole truth of whether the tumor was malignant.

When Vova answered that it had to be tested, his father told Vova to be sure to inform him the moment he knew - he would need to have time to prepare for death. Even though the tumor was malignant, Rabbi Gdud's recovery was uneventful and he was well for three years.

Ever since my adolescence in the stiflingly crowded ghetto, I have dreamt of a house of our own - progressing from wanting the privacy of a cubicle, to now dreaming of a house with a view. After considerable research I found a house-plan which suited our needs, with our bedroom insulated by the living room from the noise of the children's bedrooms and play room. After we bought a lovely hillside lot, we engaged an architect and gave him our budget.

We almost did not get to build our house - the bids on it were more than double the budget. It was only with the help of the kind and honest contractor, Tom Cavanaugh, that I was able to discard the expensive nonessentials and, after discharging the architect, to proceed with the building of the house of our dreams, with its vast windows looking out onto the valley, its many cupboards and bookshelves, its terraces and swimming pool.

When we were in our house more than a year and the twins entered the first grade, I felt it was time for me to return to chemistry. I called Pomona college to inquire about post-doctoral refresher courses. Instead of that, Freeman Allen, a very kind Organic Chemistry professor, hired me as a part-time research associate and very patiently assisted me with instructions and advice as to the courses to audit.
This was the beginning of a lasting friendship with the Allens and a relationship with all the wonderful people of the Chemistry Department of Pomona College which is sustaining me up to this day.

When the twins were in second grade, I realized that, in our family of avid readers Mike, (who had a "B" in reading), was sight-reading only, unwilling to even attempt the sounding out of unfamiliar words.
We enrolled him in a "Reading Clinic" with one on one tutoring - he is now the best reader of us all.
The fact that approximately at the same time I have given away our television set (pusillanimously telling the children that it was totally broken), may have had quite a bit to do with Mike's progress.
I felt that the complete absence of television was the only way in which I could ban the continuous watching of war and crime movies - I was not a good disciplinarian.

My parents usually spent part of the summer months with us. My mother was wonderful - a sensitive, loving, compassionate and insightfull human being. Even though she had imperfect vision, her great love for her grandchildren made her amazingly aware of their doings and needs. It was upon my mother's advice that we bought a piano and arranged for piano lessons for Anne and Lenny (we underestimated Mike's musical ear thinking that he was tone-deaf like myself).

Anne adored animals - any sick or wounded creature ended up in our house. Anne's greatest love were horses. She would help the neighbors shovel manure ever since we moved to our house. We had promised Anne a horse when she would be ten; she reminded us of this often and finally after a very good report card when she was nine we got her first horse for her, a pinto she named Lady. We installed Lady in a corral we built with a shed in a ravine on our lot.
Anne single handedly took complete care of Lady and her next horse, Arab, who was given to her by an owner to whom Anne was recommended as a responsible animal lover. Anne even repaired the shed's overhang when it fell during a storm - she wouldn't wait till Vova could come home from the office - the horse was getting wet.

The years flew by, in 1967 we were rudely awakened from our selfabsorption by the Arab threat of pushing Israel into the Mediterranean and the world's indifference. The echos of the Holocaust rang in our ears, reminding us of who we were and that Israel's existance was vitally needed by us too.
Our ecstasy over Israel's amazing Six Day War victory knew no bounds. In July of 1967 Lenny had the privilege of being Bar Mitzvah at his granfather's temple and having Rabbi Dov Ber Gdud conduct the service. Since my parents had been invited to the Sedlis summer-house in Long Island, I as-

sumed that they would not want to come to California and they would not need an invitation, anyway - I thus did not invite them formally... I did not realize how important the Bar Mitzvah of the first grandson was, even for non-religious Jews - and how easily a parents' feelings can be hurt - I know better now.

In 1968 we went to Israel with the Brauns - the first time for me.
It was an overwhelming experience. Our Israeli friends opened their homes to us and took us around to the memorable places. I was full of pride as I looked at the brave and handsome Israeli soldiers - quite a difference from us powerless ghetto Jews, murdered with impunity just a few years ago, as I so well remember... My heart expanded as we walked around the walls of the old city of Jerusalem and up onto the heights of the fortress of Massada where we were told that the Israeli recruits swore: "Massada will never fall again!"
When we were taken to the Golan Heights and were shown the grim Syrian fortifications from which they could shell with impunity the kibbutzim down below, the strangely overcast, black-yellow clouds gave me an oppressive perception of evil. Later I realized this perception might have been due to the flu I was coming down with. I decided to come back to Israel next year with the children.

In late 1968 it was suspected and the tragic diagnosis was confirmed in 1969 - Vova's father, Rabbi Gdud had metastatic liver cancer. Vova was open with his father about the bad prognosis. His stepmother never could forgive Vova his forthrightness, even though it was what his father requested previously. Vova's father died after painful chemotherapy on December 25th, 1969. He left Vova a packet of his handwritten thoughts and his "will" - a list of charities he wanted Vova to support - Vova does so until today. Rabbi Gdud was incredibly brave; when Vova had difficulties in expediting the body for burial in Israel without delay as was his father's request (the Israeli Consulate was closed for vacation) and had to call the Consul at his house, he was amazed when the Consul said he would be glad to meet Vova at the consulate immediately.
It appeared that Rabbi Gdud had called the Consul a month before, requesting that there should be no delay in the expediting of a body for burial to Israel, as was demanded by religious law. When asked whose body it was, Rabbi Gdud had answered: "It is my body, I am your client".

In 1969 I went to Israel with the children, Lenny to a youth, the twins to a children's camp and I to a Hebrew Ulpan (vigorous language experience). I had always wanted to learn Hebrew, now finally I had the opportunity of actually doing something about it.

There was another incredibly wonderful part to our Israel experience: during my trip to Jerusalem with Lenny, I realized that in front of me stood not a troublemaking child but a son to whom I could relate as to an adult and whose friendship I would treasure. This changed the world for me and perhaps for him too.

Vova and I went to Israel again in 1971 while the kids went to youth camps there. In the fall Lenny left for Pomona College - close by and the place where I worked, but still it was away from home... I was glad that Lenny chose Pomona rather than Stanford, even though I, his mother, worked there. I never visited him without being asked to do so.

Mike flowered after coming out of his older brother's shadow. He lost weight and joined the acting group of his high school.

From a sweet child Anne became an angry, resentful teenager. Her studies suffered, we did not approve of her friends. I had the feeling that she was crouching behind a wall, leaving the wall's protection only to snipe at me.

In 1973 Anne and Mike went to a J.C.A. summer camp in Israel; In J.C.A., in Israel and then as a camp councelor next year in California, Anne met interesting kids who showed her that a good, cultivated mind makes one better company, rather than a bore, as she thought before. This opened the fascinating world of enlightenment to her - she did well in school and was a Honors Student in her senior year. This was to help her in her aplication to Pitzer College.

In the same year Lenny was sent through Pomona college to a summer Hebrew course at the Tel Aviv University. On his way home Lenny stopped in Athens with a friend and went to a Greek island, not knowing that immediately after he left, there was a terrorist attack at the airport with many wounded and killed and we were going crazy, calling Athens trying to learn what happened to him.

In 1974, after I went to New Hampshire for a Chemical Conference, I visited my parents in New York and finally prevailed upon them to move to California.

I rented a nice second floor apartment with a large balcony for them in Claremont, furnished the terrace-balcony lovingly and put a multitude of flowering potted plants on it. I hoped that they would enjoy the intellectual atmosphere of this college town.

Lenny got admitted to the Einstein Medical School after having striven hard for this difficult achievement - we were all very happy for him.

Our happy world crashed down on us when my mother had a stroke on January 25th, 1975. She was speechless and only semi-conscious and our attempts at rehabilitation were useless. Again like Gita before, my father never forgave Vova for telling him the bad prognosis when father had asked him for it.

The shock of my mother's stroke induced in me optic neuritis with temporary blindness in one eye.

My father was extremely loving toward mother and visited and fed her twice a day at the nursing home.

I prevailed upon father to start writing his memoirs, assuring him that it would be the very best inheritance that he could leave for his descendants.

My Mother died on July 25th, 1975, at the age of 76. Her death left a terrible void in my life - she was the only human being who I was sure loved me unconditionally - however mad she might have been at me at some time. Even at 46 it is hard to be an orphan.

Anne was accepted to Pitzer college (one of the Claremont Colleges), Mike first to University of Redlands and then, after the first quarter, he transferred to Occidental college.

During January 1976 Mike went with a Redlands group for a course on rural life in Mexico. He stayed in Mexico for a couple of weeks after the end of the course and went to Yucatan, on the way to which he was arrested by the Mexican police for having lost his turist card (even though he had his passport with him) and thrown into jail. By miracle he talked his jailers into releasing him by assuring them that he had no relatives from whom he could get any money.

After his experience with rural Mexico, Mike decided that he wanted to be a doctor, even though he took no science courses in high school. We were disappointed, feeling that he was wasting his talents. I was also afraid that he would have trouble with getting into Medical school - I had experience with the pre-med students at Pomona college. Our worries were unnecessary.

In 1977 I got a call from New York that my cousin Dora's daughter Irina and her daughter and husband are there and need help. My father was ecstatic. With our help he brought them to Claremont where they stayed in his apartment a few months before moving out. We bought them a second-hand car of their choice. They were unpleasant people, but father continued to befriend them.

In 1978 father took Anne for a trip to the Soviet Union, where they visited Leningrad, Moscow and Wilno. In Leningrad they saw my cousin Dora Esterowicz and her husband Izia Zaks.

In the fall of 1979 Vova and I went to England and Spain. We started just the two of us in London, from there renting a car with Vova braving the driving "on the wrong side of the street". We went to the "bed and breakfast" places and found the English people much more pleasant than we had expected.

Mike had been to England the year before and gave us good advice about what to see, but we had only ten days, so we could only see Winchester Cathedral, seeing a procession, then the beautiful Cotswolds where we would eat berries from the hedges, we then went to Bath with its lovely Roman bathhouse, then on to Strathford on Avon where we saw a presentation of "King Lear", finally Cambridge on the way back to London, and then on to Spain.

In Spain we had arranged to meet our dear friends, Nelly and Baruch Shub with whom we took a car and drove from Malaga through Seville, Granada and Toledo to Madrid. Baruch never wanted to move without making the reservations for the next stop - as I prefer, too. Vova, on the other hand, never wanted to be bound by reservations. He talked Borka into going to Granada without making reservations. We came to a rainy Granada to learn that just about all of Spain was there too, there was a national happening there and there was not a room to be had inside many miles of Granada.

Muttering "I told you so", Borka was resigned to trying to sleep in the car.

Not so Vova! After fruitlessly calling all the hotels from a phone-booth he started to make the rounds of the hotels. In one of the fanciest hotels he heard the manager fighting with a prospective guest whose reservations were mismanaged. After the guest left Vova managed to talk the manager into giving him a room, and then even a rollaway bed, so both we and the Shubs slept in state.

In Toledo we wanted to go to a wonderful picturesque "Parador". When we called for reservations a few days before, they laughed - reservations were taken six months ahead. We made reservations in another hotel, but Vova wanted to go see the Parador. It was gorgeous, situated on a hill that commanded a view of the whole of Toledo! Vova started to persuade the manager to keep us in mind. After some time the manager said that if a large group coming soon had less people than they made reservations for, we might have a chance... In a couple of hours we had two beautiful rooms! I seem to remember these "triumphs" more than I do the museums.

My uncle, David Gerstein died of cancer in Montreal in October of 1979, while we were on our vacation.

In the fall of 1980 we went to China, I was eager to see it before it would be "all westernized". It was fascinating, even though, not speaking Chinese, we could not talk to the population, only to the appointed by the state travel guides. We went to fascinating Beijing and the Great Wall, then to lively Canton, beautiful Quailin and then to Shanghay. Even though our flight to Tokyo would leave from Shanghay next day, we could not stay over but were put on a flight to Beijing where we spent the night that was on our itinerary and put on a flight back to Shanghay. We indeed saw China before it was "westernized". The contrast with modern Japan was shocking... We spent a few days in beautiful Kyoto.

My father was very lonely; he would go to New York or Florida where he had friends and was thinking of perhaps marrying some lady of his acquaintance - I encouraged this but nothing came of it. I acquainted him with professors from the Claremont colleges who were stimulating company for him. Prof. Vieg introduced father to the University Club, a faculty group discussing questions of politics and economy. My father wrote an essay for the club about what he thought was the mismanagement of the American economy, the English of the first couple pages of the essay were kindly corrected by prof. Vieg, the rest by Anne and myself.

Father wrote also letters about current events both to the other members of the club, to the newspapers, to senator Jackson and to President Nixon.

See Appendix.

In 1980 father had a prostatectomy; some malignancy was found but we were assured that at the age of 83 father had nothing to worry about.

After having graduated from the Einstein medical school in 1979, Lenny married Stacy Grossman on March 14th of 1981 and father danced at his wedding. Because Stacy would not think of leaving her parents, Lenny took his pediatric residency in New York, where he subsequently started a practice in Long Island; his son, Benjamin Dov, was born there in 1982.

In the spring of 1982 my father and I went on a Globus Bus Tour to Scandinavia, Russia, Poland, Germany and Holland.

Since we were to drive from Moscow to Smolensk and then to Minsk, skirting Wilno by just a few miles, I decided that we should arrange to fly from Moscow to Wilno for two days and take a bus from Wilno to Minsk to meet our tour. I arranged this two months before our date of departure, but simple things are not simple in the Soviet Union. When our group received their Soviet visas, our visas were not with them.

When the visas belatedly came, they were sent by Globus to await us in Helsinki. They were not picked up from the post office, however, and when we came to Helsinki with our tour on a Saturday, the post office was closed for the weekend with no possibility of opening it to get our visas. Thus we missed our tour's departure on Sunday and our one full day in Leningrad. We picked up our visas on Monday and took a train to Leningrad, where we would have only half of the day of Tuesday. On the train we had an unpleasant encounter with a Soviet customs officer.

My cousin Dora, her husband Izia and their son Gary awaited us in Leningrad and ate dinner with us.

Gera had lost his important scientific position because of his sister's departure for the U.S.. Gary would not let me take a picture of him - he was afraid.

A kind friend of Jasha Brauns's adopted sister, Irena, doctor Laufer, a refusenik, took off a half day from work and drove us around Leningrad in his car. Thus with his help my father could show me some of the places made memorable for me by his tales of his stay in Petrograd during his student years. He showed me the square of the Uprising - the former Znamenskaya - the place of the many revolutionary meetings, now empty of the monument of the mounted Alexander III - the former "peoples rostrum" described by him, as well as the house where he lived - and many other memorable places where he spent his student years during the time of the Democratic and then Bolshevik revolutions.

After a visit in Moscow we took a short, uneventful flight to our native city of Wilno. The warmth and friendship of Jack Braunses adopted sister Irena Waisaite, (a professor at the Vilnius - Wilno University) made the visit much more meaningful and even seeing the ghetto and Ponary less painful. For me the memories of these horrendous years are more bearable since, however terrible they were, I had not lost the people vital to my happiness - my mother and father.

In Ponary the inscription on the monument mentions the victims as "Soviet citizens" - not Jews. We also went to Suboch, where the H.K.P. camp used to be and then to Zavalna 2/2 to our old apartment from which we had been driven into the ghetto in 1941 - the street looked just the same, just more unkempt than I remember it.

Through the eyes of Irena we could understand the life in Wilno much better than we were able to glimpse the life in the Soviet Union.

From Wilno we took a couple of hours train ride to nearby Minsk where we rejoined our group and went with them to Warsaw, beautifully rebuilt after the devastation of W.W. II - our guide jokingly told us that we were seeing the newest antiquities. We could see the hotel in which I celebrated my 10th birthday in 1939, there is no trace of the ruins of the Ghetto, just a monument.

From Warsaw we went to West Berlin. Father was very eager to talk to the Berliners, his memories of his beautiful student years were very vivid. I took his picture next to the Kranzler's coffeehouse, the knowledge of which was instrumental in saving his life during that horrible night of July 1941. From Berlin we went to Amsterdam, where we left our group and spent a delightful few days with our friends Joyce and Jack Brauns who happened to be there.

Our first grandson and my father's great-grandson, Benjamin Dov Good, (Dov in memory of Vova's father, Rabbi Dov Ber Gdud) was born to Lenny's wife Stacy on July 15th, 1982.

After our wonderful and meaningful vacation my father very soon had what were thought to be bad arthritic pains - it was only at the beginning of 1983 that a bone scan diagnosed widespread metasthases of his supposedly "innocuous" prostate cancer. Father's illness was temporarily helped by estrogen therapy and he was able to come to the wedding of Mike, who after graduating from medical school married Susan Possidente in Conneticut on May 29th of 1983.

After finishing his family practice residency Mike opened a group practice with two of his fellow residents in Middletown, Conneticut.

Mike and Sue's son Jonathan was born on March 15 of 1984 and father still got to see his second great-grandson.

My father was very eager to inspire Anne "to find a way in life" - to acquire a profession.

Since she was a great animal lover, he forcefully suggested that if it was impossible for her to get into the extremely competitive California University at

Davis Veterinary Medical school, we should help her look into foreign Veterinary schools. It took some doing to inspire Anne to consider this - she was not eager to become a "professional" and felt that her academic endeavors were completed with her B.A. from the U.C. at Santa Cruz, but father managed to do so.
Anne and I went to look at the Veterinary schools in the Dominican republic and the Ross University at the Island of Dominica. Anne chose Ross U. and after taking chemistry and physics courses in Santa Cruz, enrolled at the Ross U. Veterinary school at the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. Anne's school years were very hard, especially since it pained her terribly that the school had to intentionally hurt the animals in order to have "patients" for the students to study on. She even dropped out for a year, but then decided to come back and complete her studies.

My father died of metastatic prostate cancer on Jan. 23rd 1985.

My father's life was memorialized by Mike's and the Sedlis' eulogies read at his funeral.

EULOGIES

Grandson Michael Good

Dear Friends;

Every person who lives their life and then dies makes an impression on those who knew them. The impression may be good or bad, admirable or not. It is an image of this person that others will see in their minds eye, think about and relay to others - in many ways it constitutes ones legacy, to be carried through the years by memories and stories.

I would like to share with you some of my impressions of my Grandfather Samuel Esterowicz which I will carry through my lifetime.
Most of all I was struck by his love of the truth. Grandpa always was in search of the truth - he felt that if armed with the real story or truly accurate facts, the right solution to a dilemma could be found.
This love of truth was his moral guide - he felt that by dealing with people truthfully, without any distortions or deceptions he could conduct his life with a clear conscience. Truth was always held in highest esteem because he thought it could guide him to do the right thing. More than anyone else I have met, Grandpa was a man who stuck to his convictions. This made him an impractical man - the pursuit of the truth does not allow for compromises to solve conflicts or makes up the stuff of smooth social graces. Yet his convictions served him and his family well - Gentiles who he dealt with fairly and morally in pre-war Poland stepped forward to help him and his family during the second World War, enabling them to survive the Holocaust.

As I watch myself go through life accepting everyday compromises, I sometimes find myself saying things that are not entirely true, but rather socially convenient. At times like these as well as during times of great conflict I appreciate the difficulty of the path that Grandpa chose. He will be for me a beacon of integrity by which I will assess and at times adjust my path through life.

Another image that I carry of my Grandfather is that of a man who lived through so much history - Czarist Russia, World War I, the Russian Revolution, World War II, the Holocaust and the Nuclear Age. He lived through and experienced the major upheavals of this century and possibly the most earthshaking events of human history. Yet as a student of history he always regarded his life with perspectives from the past. He always tried to take lessons from history to apply to the future. He tried to encourage me to take the world view when considering the social events around me. He hoped that people would learn to take into consideration facts from both the past and the present in charting the future.

My Grandfather was a unique man, the kind of which cannot be found anymore. He was a man who tried to absorb and learn from the humanistic achievements of Western Civilization. He studied Literature, Art, Music, History, Philosophy and Economics. Today I and most people I know devote much of our energies to mastering the technological information proliferating at breakneck speed. Whether we are doctors, chemists, car mechanics or T.V. repairmen - we expend our intellectual energies mastering information that will soon be obsolete. Granpa grew up in the pre-technological era. He gave me a glimpse of the values and knowledge that people used to devote their lives to. He devoted his energies not to computers or cars, but rather to the accumulation of human emotions, expressions and experience that have been passed down through the ages. He helped me to recognize how narrow and limited is the path I am treading, making me aware of broader roads to explore and to pursue.

These are some of the lasting impressions my Grandfather left with me. In my mind and heart I will always carry the figure of a man who was continually engaged in a quest for knowledge and truth to help him follow the road of integrity, based on the past, leading to the future.

These are the the spontaneous, unsolicited eulogies sent to us from New York by our dearest friends, Mila and Alik Sedlis and their sons Steven and Danny.

Mila Sedlis' message, read by Anne Good, granddaughter of Samuel:

We are sorry that we are not here with you today. We do have the need to share with you our thoughts and feelings in this sad moment and therefore decided to do so by writing.

Munia was for us much more than just another good friend or even a family member. He somehow in his lifetime became a legend, a link between the very important past, the present and the future. He provided the continuity with the past that was unexplainable, both good, rich, warm and terribly cruel. Things that we never could explain to our children became understandable through Munia. The spirit of Wilno life, with its cultural interest, personal loyalties, its romanticism would be very foreign to our children if they did not know Munia, did not listen to his countless stories, political discussions and arguments, if they did not hear him singing the romances of Wertinski and if they did not experience his warm friendship, his interest and his concern.

"Diadia Munia" was a very unique person, an emancipated Jew with deep interest in Jewish problems. He was individualistic and unconventional and looked at events from a historical perspective. He had his own views on things and he was ready to defend them.

He had lived a long and interesting life that had spanned different eras and different worlds and he generously shared his experiences, thoughts and memories with us.
We admired his love of people and his honesty, we admired his intellectual curiosity, his optimism and his enthusiasm that kept him active until the end.

We are grateful for having had the opportunity to be close to him.
We will miss him , but never forget him.

Danny Sedlis message, read by Anne (crying)

I will always remember Diadia Munia for all his wonderful qualities, his honor, loyalty and warmth. But beyond that, one of my earliest and vivid memories will always be of Diadia Munia and Tiotia Ida the wonderful couple downstairs who were always so close to each other and also so close to us.

The last time I spoke to Diadia Munia was on the tolephone last September. At first we had a very pleasant chat about family, politics- the things we had talked about many times before, but at the end of the conversation Munia told me that he was very ill, that he had cancer and that he was going to die. He added that he had not made peace with Death and was not ready to go. I did not know what I could possibly tell him - maybe I could have said that we were not ready to see him go either.

Alik Sedlis message, read by grandson Lenny Good.

Munia deeply affected each one of us and everybody has his own story to tell about him. I remember Munia as a loyal friend deeply involved in our personal problems, always interested in family happenings, not only while we were neighbours in New York, but also after their move to California. He was always ready to listen, to offer advice and generous help.
I will never forget when he handed me his Bank passbook to loan me money for my first car.
Munia was deeply involved not only in the affairs of his friends but also the survivors from Wilno, refugees from the Soviet Union, the State of Israel and national and international politics. He often had strong feelings and did not hesitate to express them, like when he wrote to president Nixon in support of his ideas.
The survivors from Wilno will remember Munia for organizing the Wilno Society, giving them an opportunity to get together and to help the less fortunate.

I will always remember Munia as a living encyclopaedia of history.
He had a remarkable memory and we enjoyed listening to his stories about the World War I, the Communist Revolution and World War II. His stories were not just a recounting of events, but always a useful lesson for the future.

Munia inspired by his example. He was a strong survivor, always young in body and mind and in these troubled times he will stay in our minds as a rock of Gibraltar.

Steven Sedlis contribution read by grandson Lenny Good.

I spent the summer before the 8th grade writing a paper about the history of Russia. At the end of my copious list of references I added - Mr. Samuel Esterowicz who taught me more about the history of Russia than all the books put together. Munia never failed to remind me of that citation whenever we met, even when we met for the last time at his home a little more than a year ago. I think he would appreciate its mention at this occasion because it reflects how he would like to be remembered - as a teacher; and he was a marvelous teacher. The breadth and depth of his knowledge and his amazing memory allowed him to discuss at length, at great length, history and politics and economics - and if you listened you would learn a lot.
I usually disagreed with most of what he said, but later, upon reflection, I often realized that he was right.

But Munia was more than a teacher. To me, he usually presented his scholarly side and his opinions, expressed in his strong personal style that we all know so well. But as I grew older I became aware of another side of Munia, a side perhaps more important to him than scholarship, or politics, or economics: Munia loved life.
He was a Bon Vivant in the fullest sense of that term. He very much enjoyed good Vodka, goodlooking women, art and most of all good company. Munia loved life, and his stubborn defiance of his final illness was typical of his devotion to life, to a good life.

Yes, Munia was a marvelous teacher and what he taught those of us who knew him and loved him was the most important lesson of all - HOW TO LIVE.

I felt that the best way of honoring my Fathers' memory would be for me to translate his memoirs - as Father had suggested but I demurred to begin with, thinking it to be too much "blood, sweat and tears". Now it was worthwhile for me, it even gave more meaning to my life - by now the children were away, Vova was very busy as usual and my chemistry work was winding down.

I have had a mastectomy of my right breast because of cancer detected by Vova in February of 1986. After some hesitation I agreed to chemotherapy since I had involvement of two nodes. Because of the immunosuppression engendered by it I got hepatitis just as the kids came for a visit in April and I had a one week's vacation from chemotherapy since I so wanted to be able to have fun with them. The chemotherapy was interrupted for six weeks but then continued until November 1986.

Lenny's and Stacy's second son, Jesse Aaron, was born in October of 1986.

Vova had a supra-pubic prostatectomy in December of 1986. He was very stoic, as usual, during his very painful convalescence. Being away from the of-

fice, he had the time to tell the Kaiserman family the story of his survival during the Holocaust, as they had requested for years. The Kaisermans taped his story and gave us a copy; I transcribed the tape.
While doing so I decided that the Gdud family story should be told much more widely. I knew about Vova's grandparents, his Mother and Father. I also heard about many more Holocaust incidents. After writing down what I knew, I interviewed Vova and with his help and supervision created the "Gdud Family Chronicle", which was my loving gift to him.
Since my Father wanted to include the story of the Gdud family in his memoirs, but Vova only gave him the sketchiest of information, I decided to include the Gdud chronicle description of Vova's survival in the memoirs, as would have been my Father's wish.

Mike's and Sue's daughter, Rebecca Emily was born in March of 1987.

Some years ago we received a letter from Israel from a writer named Karpinowicz. In it he described that when in Poland as a member of an Israeli delegation to a memorial for the Warsaw ghetto uprising he was accosted by a Pole who asked him whether he spoke Polish. Learning that Karpinowicz was a native of Poland, the Pole asked him whether he knew a family from Wilno named Gdud. The man, Leonard Paszkowski said that his mother, Felicja Paszkowska had helped the Gduds to survive during the Nazi occupation. The writer took down all the pertinent information and later published a "wanted" ad in various Israeli newspaers. As a result we received several letters from our friends in Israel and even one from the writer Karpinowicz who inquired whether Vova was the right person and gave us the address of Leonard Paszkowski in Poland. After writing to Karpinoicz to thank him and assure him that indeed he was the Gdud he wanted, Vova wrote in great excitement to Paszkowski in Tychy, Poland to verify whether he was the son of "Josefowa" - that was how Vova knew her, so he checked whether Paszkowski's father's name was Josef. When he assured us of this we began a wonderful, affectionate and lively correspondence. Leonard (Lolek) is a prolific writer. He wrote about his family, life in Poland and in Niemenczyn, his Mother's health, the people Vova knew. He even sent us Polish holy pictures. Lolek is a retired miner, married, his wife's name is Danusia. They have two sons and one grandson, Piotrus. His mother and sister still live in Niemenczyn, it is hard for him to get permission to visit them. At first we tried to send Lolek packages with things that are scarce in Poland but the better articles were stolen so we send him cashiers checks which he can deposit into a special dollar account from which he can remove dollars to use in the "dollar stores" for merchandise unavailable otherwise. Many of the checks we sent Lolek he was using for his grandsons "Piotrus house".
Vova also sent him the antibiotics he requested for Piotrus.

We petitioned Yad VaShem, both in Jerusalem and in Warsaw, to have the Paszkowski family honored as belonging to the "Righteous among the Nations", describing what they did for the Gdud family during the Nazi occupation both in English as well as in Polish. This rather involved procedure is not yet completed. When Vova asked Libke Rudaszewski for corroboration, she remained worthy of her nickname the "calf", she answered that she did not remember the Paszkowskis.
We repeatedly asked Lolek what were his Mother's needs. He checked with her and she would have liked a hearing aid hidden in the eyeglass frame. Regrettably a hearing aid has to be fitted by an otologist to a person's hearing defect. The best Vova could come up with was a kind of funnel to be put in a persons ear and turned towards the speaker.

Lolek said she is still too vain to use it.
Lolek repeatedly invited us to visit him in Poland but what Vova really wanted was to go to Niemenczyn. I was reluctant to go to the Soviet Union - I still vividly remembered my father's and my experience with the customs in 1982. However, when we were in New York to visit Lenny (after going to Middletown, Conn. to admire Mike's daughter Rebecca, born on March 5th, 1987), we had dinner with my dear friend Mira Jedwabnik (Van Doren) and her husband John; hearing that they were going to Wilno, I agreed to come with their group to Leningrad, Wilno and Moscow.
Lolek had written to us that he would be in Lida (a town not far from Wilno). When we decided to go on the group trip to the Soviet Union which included a visit to Wilno we wrote to Lolek about the date of our arrival there.
Lolek answered that he would try to be with his mother in Niemenczyn at that time, he also gave us the telephone number of his nephew Stas in Niemencyn but warned us not to call from our hotel where the phones would be bugged.

Before our departure for the Soviet Union at the Kennedy airport in New York the travel agency enjoined us not to admit that any of us spoke Russian, were born in the Soviet Union or had relatives or friends there - apparently that was a demand of Inturist. Vova said immediately that this was out of the question - his main reason for going to Wilno was his great desire to see the people who had risked their lives to save his. Vova was sure that he would be able to communicate his feelings, even to the Inturist.

Upon our arrival in Wilno (now Vilnius) it was strange to find Lithuanian as the prevailing language - it used to be Polish and Yiddish, some Bielorussian. Now everybody had to know Lithuanian and some Russian, the Poles knew Polish, of course.
Our group was taken to the new 19 floor hotel Lietuva, (a skyscraper for Wilno) which stood on the spot (Wielkomirska 28) where my grandfather Esterowicz's apartment house and small industrial buildings used to stand. We were taken for a sightseeing ride by our nice Lithuanian guide, Vilte.
She readily agreed when we told her that we would like to wander on our own in our native city, but when Vova said that on the day after we wanted to go to Niemenczyn, she was distressed: Oh no, that is out of the city limits. When Vova told her how vital this was for him, she took us to the Inturist desk of our hotel. When the Inturist lady repeated that it was out of city limits and therefore forbidden, she asked:
"And why do you want to go there anyway?"
Vova answered: "Because that is where I was born, that is where the people who saved my life are. I have waited 43 years and came many thousands of kilometers to see them."
The Inturist agent was impressed and said OK, I will make the request, you can come back tonight.

We started to walk around, Vova's old apartment house on Kalvaryjska street next to the Green Bridge was near to the hotel. It was built in the style of a mediaeval castle standing on the shore of the river Wilja. Instead of residential apartments it now housed the School of Architecture with its offices and lecture halls. We went in - the door to the Gdud's old apartment was locked. Impudently Vova pushed in the door - I visualized us ending in Siberia for destroying State property. I was watching on the stairs to warn him if somebody was coming. We roamed inside what used to be the Gdud family's apartement.
All the inside walls were removed to form a lecture hall. We took pictures from the balcony and went to the secluded green nook with a view of the city downstairs where Vova used to do his homework.

We met our dear friend Irena Vaisaite then. Irena is a professor of Western literature at the Pedagogical Institute of Vilnius, she is the adopted sister of Jack Brauns. Irena's warmth and openness enchanted my father and myself during our hard won side-trip to Wilno in 1982; now again her friendship and hospitality was very precious for us. We wandered around, saw the apartment house on Zawalna 2 where our family used to live before the war. Vova asked me if I would like to try to get into what was once our apartment, the way he did on Kalvaryjska, but I preferred to remember it as it used to be. We did go up with Mira Van Doren to what used to be the nearby apartment of her family, the Jedwabniks.

When we returned that evening the Inturist lady said: OK, you can go to Niemenczyn for four hours.
Four hours! That is nothing - we need a day or two!
It is very expensive, you'll have to pay $130 for even the four hours.
We will pay whatever you want, but we need more time!
Four hours, take it or leave it.
We took it, with Vova hoping to be able to bribe the "guide" (who would keep us under surveillance) and stay longer. We made arrangements to go from ten to two. Vova called Paszkowski's nephew Stas and told him that we would be there tomorrow morning. Lolek and Danusia were staying in the house of his sister Lilka with whom their mother Felicja was living.

However, there came an unexpected alteration in our plans: our group was going to Ponary next morning, from ten to twelve. Vova felt that we should grab the chance of going there even though I would have preferred to go there privately with our friend Irena, without the tourists. We changed our appointment with Inturist from 10 AM to 1 PM but Vova had no chance of going to a public phone to call Stas about our change of plans.

Vova's description of his feelings in Ponary:
I felt indescribably strange on being in Ponary again - the monument, the inscription on which there was no mention that most of the killed were Jews, the many, many graves. I couldn't orient myself which was my mass grave and in which direction lay the house of the kind peasant who had given me a shirt after I ran away from the grave in 1941. I finally found an old caretaker who remebered how the place looked decades ago.
We both wrote in the visitors book of the Ponary museum.
It was getting late, almost one o'clock, but our group was not yet ready to leave. Steven Sherman, our wonderful group leader, suddenly found two Israelis - a member of the Knesset and a journalist who, when Steven told them that one of the members of his group was almost executed here in 1941 were very eager to meet Vova. He did so very hurriedly, he was frantic - we were late. He was wasting the precious hours allowed him in Niemenczyn.
Mira had a wonderful idea - ask Vilte (our guide) to call Inturist and delay our departure from one to two PM. Vilte kindly did so and was able to arrange the delay - what a relief!

We came to the hotel and found Regina, our Inturist "guide" waiting for us. When we came to the car, there was also a driver named Slava, very formal in suit and tie. That complicated matters - we were hoping to bribe the guide to let us stay longer, but with two of them there one would check up on the other. As we were driving the 18 km to Niemenczyn Vova asked Regina what language she preferred to speak (this was important, the Lithuanians and the Poles hate each other and they both hate the Russians). She answered

that her mother was Polish and her father Lithuanian so we could speak Polish to her. We took advantage of the half hour it took us to drive to Niemenczyn to tell Regina
about what Felicja Paszkowski had done for the Gdud family during the Nazi occupation. She seemed impressed and well-wishing.

When we came to Lilka's house where Felicja was living - she had given the old Paszkowski house to Lilka's son Stas, Stas let us in but said that since we were so late Lolek and Danusia got worried that there may be trouble and went out; they had come illegally to meet us, they did not have a permit for Niemenczyn, only for Lida - maybe 50 km. away. Lilka went out to work after waiting, Stas was going to bring them all. Grandma was in her bedroom - Vova went in and saw Josefowa sitting on her bed, older but still lovely.
Vova embraced her and they cried - they couldn't stop crying for maybe twenty minutes. Regina, the Inturist "guide" must have felt that she was intruding and was decent enough (even though she must have been ordered to keep us under constant observation) to say that she would visit a friend in Niemenczyn and would return in twenty minutes. Lolek and Danusia were back by that time, so we took advantage of the unsupervised moment to unload the gifts we brought - jeans, clothes, perfume, money and so on. The love and happiness was like a radiance in that room, I felt. By that time Stas brought Lilka from her work. When Regina came back the Paszkowskis brought out their own ham, cheese and preserves, we sat around the table eating , drinking tea and reminiscing about those horrible times of 1941 - 1944. As we talked Vova happened to ask: "By the way, where are the Liszykowskis now?" "Oh, Konstanty died of lung cancer, but Manka, his wife and his son are here in Niemenczyn and so is his brother Vincent." "How about Vince Gasperowicz?" "Oh, he still is living in the same house in LipoLata not far from where the turpentine factory used to be. "How about the Ilewicz?" "Genia, their niece still lives in that village". My God! Vova had to see all of them! He also wanted to put flowers on the grave of his Mother and Motl.
Stas had a car, so that even though we had to go in the Inturist car with the guide, Stas offered to drive in front of us with Lolek and Lilka to guide us to all those places. We took many pictures with all the Paszkowskis, especially Felicja. The clock was ticking, two hours had already passed. When Vova tried to persuade Regina that we'll be glad to pay the Inturist and her any amount to be able to stay longer, she said that was impossible, our car and driver were reserved on another job at six o'clock.

So we had to run after embracing Felicja. We drove to Manka Liszykowski. She did not expect us so she did not recognize Vova, but when he told her that he was Wowka Gdud she cried and embraced him - but she was also mad: "How come didn't you ever contact us during all those years? Not a word, not even a postcard!" Vova apologized: "Dearest Manichka, I did not know where you were, I din't even know if you were alive." Felicja did not give her our address and did not tell us about her. Apparently she does not like her. Lolek thinks that perhaps it is because of resentment: they are of the same age, Felicja is debilitated, a little confused and Manka is full of vim and vigor. Manka's son looks just like his father, Konstanty Liszykowski, but unfortunately he looks very sick. Vova gave Manka some gifts and money, we took pictures.
Next we ran to Vincent Liszykowski. He did not recognize Vova either but was glad to see him - it was hard to understand his thick Bielorussian dialect.
Next we went across the street to the old Paszkowski house which Felicja had given to Stas - it looks very nice now. We went up to the attic in which Vova

and his father used to hide - when they would come over at night sometimes they had to stay over for the day because the nights were not long enough for them to make it back while it was still dark.
The space between the attic ceiling and the roof was very shallow and it required great strength to pull oneself up and squeeze into this hiding-place which they would use in case of alarm. I couldn't stop wondering how they ever managed to climb up there. Vova's answer was:
"It's simple if your life depends on it!"

I could well understand that - I remembered my doings in the melina when, in July of 1944, just when we needed the melina that I found and my father had helped to finish, we found the entrance to the tunnel inundated and everybody thought that we could not get into it but I and another woman plunged in and found it passable, with some air near the ceiling.

Lolek assembled a little "Gdud museum" in the Paszkovski attic:
old photos, certificates, a variety of old tools and utensils the Gduds had used.
Next we drove to the village of Lipolata where the Gdud factory and house used to be - not a trace, just a beautiful meadow. Lolek wanted to take Vova to the Goat Rock, the big rock they used to play on - but there was no time.

Next was the Gasperowicz house. Vince, a widower appearing older than his age, still lives in the same house with his children and grandchildren, he uses the same barn in which Vova had been locked in by the Lithuanian.
Vince said: "Quite a dramatic happening took place here some 45 years ago."
The field over which Vova ran while being shot at seemed much shorter to him now.
Vince said "You are right, the forest has grown in." He remembered the event perfectly, even Vova throwing off the sheepskin jacket to run faster, but he counted four shots, not the seven as Vova thought, and Vova thinks that it is likely that he is correct. We took pictures with him and his grandchildren.

Next we hurried to find Genia Ilewicz, now married to a Gasperowicz.
Genia was in the field in her workclothes, cutting hay. When Vova wanted to take a picture with her, she would not let him, (even though he begged her, we were in a big hurry), until she quickly put on a pretty dress.

It was raining and getting dark when we came to the spot between the two forests where Vova's Mother and Brother were killed and buried. The place was marked by an inconspicuous sign which gave the wrong year for the massacre and did not mention that the victims were Jews. Lilka brought lovely flowers which we placed there.

When we came back from Niemenczyn Vova was euphoric. At the hotel a newspaper interviewer and a photographer were waiting for him. They had heard about him from the Inturist and wanted to see that persistant "Crazy American" who had made so much commotion and hear what he had to say.
Our friend Irena sent us to West Covina the newspaper with Vova's picture on the front page and with the interview well and warmly described at length.

We had made arrangements to meet Lolek, Danusia and Stas next day in Wilno at our friend Irena's apartement. Vova took them to the Berezka dollar store where he bought clothes for Felicja, a jacket and a set of tires for Stas.
Lolek would not let Vova buy anything for him he said everything was exorbitant - he could get better quality things for less money in Poland with the dollars we send him.

We spent the next day with Irena, we visited the house on Bakshty and the place where Vova was grabbed by the German jeep before being taken to

Ponary. We went to the ghetto, now a slum like it was before the war. I showed Vova, Mira and Johny the route on Zawalna street along which our family was chased to the ghetto and I had trouble with my pack falling apart, in September of 1941. I showed them where the exit from Straszuna street onto Zawalna had been blocked off. We entered the house on Strashuna 1 where our family had been confined. I looked around the yard, now full of clothlines, and remembered how here my mother managed to get my father excluded temporarily from the manhunt for the Estonian concentration camps in September of 1943. We then drove to the buildings on Subocz which were used as the HKP labor camp into which we were then transferred, thus being protected, even though again temporarily, from the liquidation of the ghetto. I showed them the spot where I found the hiding place "maline" which saved all our lives - first mine during the "children aktzye" in March of 1944, then our whole family's and the Gersteins (Mula, Nina and Gary), during the liquidation of the HKP camp in July of 1944, just prior to liberation. Vova could finally picture the events I used to tell him about.

We looked at the panorama of the city from the Castle Hill. In the visitor's Book Vova wrote in Polish and English an expression of his gratitude and a tribute to those citizens of our native city who had stretched out a helping hand to him in his time of need.

In June and then again in October of 1987 I had an indescribably wonderful experience of a cancer support workshop at Commonweal. It took place at the magnificent site of Commonweal on a bluff near Point Reyes. The amazingly loving and supportive atmosphere engendered by he staff inspired "a golden, healing haze of love" - we all loved each other - both the participants and staff. I was tremendously impressed by Commonweal.

Since both Lenny and Mike did not name those of their children born after my parents' deaths with my parents names to honor their memory, I felt that it would be fitting to honor my parents memory with the establishing in their names of a fund for a yearly scholarship for a Commonweal cancer workshop to be made available to those who needed it, but could not afford it.

My BELOVED late PARENTS
IDA GERSTEIN ESTEROWICZ and
SAMUEL ESTEROWICZ

JEWISH SURVIVORS of the HOLOCAUST
were DEVOTED to
KNOWLWDGE, BEAUTY and HUMAN LOVING KINDNESS

My PARENTS BELIEVED that
HOPE IS LIFE GIVING
It is in this spirit and in their

LOVING MEMORY
that this
SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

is being established to make the ENCOURAGEMENT of COMMONWEAL
Accessible to some of those who need it. In the beauty of its
healthful environment Commonweal gives the cancer patients loving
support and access to a wide field of information about their
illness and of the choices open to them. Obtaining a measure of
control over their lives, the patients are inspired with the
HOPE THEY SO DESPERATELY NEED

Pearl Esterowicz Good

In October 1987 we went to Argentina and visited in Buenos Aires Mula Gdud, the youngest brother of my father-in-law, and his children and grandchildren. Our loving and hospitable family made our visit to this faraway land so cozy... Uncle Mula's reminiscences gave Vova a new slant on the characters of both his father and mother.

After this "family get together" we went to the gorgeous Iguasu Falls on the border of Argentina and Brasil. In the hotel dining room there there was a big and noisy German speaking table. I usually don't understand German - I have not wanted to listen to the language since 1944 - but their noisy repetition of "Jude, Jude" (Jew, Jew) riveted my attention. It seems they were saying that Roosevelt was a Jew too. I immediately assumed that these were the Nazis given refuge in Argentina. We ignored them.

We went then to Rio de Janeiro - as plain turists. We had a wonderful time in Brasil and had no inkling, until we heard about it on "60 minutes", about the murder with impunity of Brazilian wives by their husbands, under the pretext that "they were defending their honor" when they murdered their wives if the wives wanted to go to college, or even if they did not prepare dinner.

In September of 1988 we went for a fascinating cruise to Alaska which we enjoyed very much, even though it was truncated by a storm in the Gulf of Alaska.

In October of 1988 and then again in January of 1989 we visited Lenny and Mike and their families, as we did many times before. Both families are proud owners of new houses.

Lenny's house is in Roslyn Heights, N.Y., a lovely prestigious location; the house is expensive even though it is rather smallish; its great advantage is Roslyn's good public school system.

Mike's house in Conneticut is much less expensive, they like their pleasant neighborhood and have delightful neighbors, but Middletown's public schools do not come up to Mike and Sue's standards.

In January 1989 our whole family got together for Anne's graduation from Veterinary School which took place at N.Y.U. in New York - how we missed my father who contributed so much to this happy occasion!

Now, more than a year later, in April of 1990, while awaiting the whole family home for Passover, everybody together again after so many years of being kept apart by circumstances, I look with love and pride at them all.

We love to spend time with our far away children and grandchildren whom we get to see so rarely. Each one of them is a special delight.

Lenny has a very special way with children and adolescents; affectionate and intuitive, he has an easy yet magnetic manner which is inviting of comraderie and fun. Lenny loves children and is a devoted and successful pediatrician, working long hours. A very warm and feeling man, he opts for playing with his children rather than enforcing rules upon coming home. There is a wonderfully close relationship between Lenny and Benjamin, more recently also between him and Jesse. Lenny's entire being is invested in his boys; playtime with his sons can be a delight to witness.

Blue eyed Benjamin, now in second grade, is a charming, handsome, bright and athletic boy, very interested in cars, sports and music, reminiscent of his father at his age. Ben is quick in mathematics and has a good memory which helps him with sight-reading - he has difficulties with mastering phonics, as did his uncle Mike 25 years ago. He is intuitive, kind to his little brother, but very insistent on getting things his way, which he manages to achieve by force of his personality and wit. His sincerity, honesty and sense of humor win everybody over.

Little Jesse is a tall, slender, blond boy who wears glasses. He is warm, affectionate and sweet-tempered unless hard pressed; he loves animals. He has a radiant smile and is a pleasure to be around.

Mike's and Sue's household is loving and easy-going. Both parents have the strength to enforce discipline in matters they regard as important. There is very limited, selective television watching, no junk food in the house, eating is controlled, dinner is a family affair.

Mike is a very intelligent and caring family physician. He practices in partnership with two of his fellow residents, they have a successful practice in Middletown, CT. He is very well-read and informed and has a clear and realistic insight into issues. He is an honest, righteous man.

He and Sue are both involved in community affairs. Mike's political science background and his grandfather Esterowicz's genes surface periodically. They campaigned successfully for a new Mayor in Middletown and fought hard for school issues.

Sue, who looks amazingly like Mike's twin sister Anne, is a very bright, perceptive and strong woman who influences and supports Mike in all his endeavours. She is extremely dedicated to the welfare of her children and is willing to bear all sacrifices for what she considers important for them. She is a nurse practitioner who gave up her position on the faculty of a nursing school and works part-time to devote her time to her children.

They live modestly, stay always within their budget and seem to be content, but would like to build a house on a bigger lot, in a community with better schools.

Jonathan, their eldest, now in kindergarten, is a charming, fascinating, dreamy faced, brown-eyed boy, incredibly resembling his father at that age. JD is good natured, clumsy, very intelligent and curious about everything around him. He has an amazing memory and intellect, he talks about being a scientist and pursues relentlessly his fascination with the surrounding world. We don't envision him to be a great athlete, but for his intellect, the sky is the limit. His interest in music and sketching must be coming from old Italian ancestry. He gives in to his three-year-old sister Rebecca, who is a much more domineering character. This petit little girl with the piercing gaze is very strong-willed, very athletic and coordinated, able to endlessly dance on the trampoline. She resembles her mother, her paternal aunt Anne and, according to her enamoured grandpa, perhaps is reminiscent of Vova's mother Hanna, a small, very dynamic, self-educated woman who was ahead of her times. Becca is very sensitive, intelligent and intuitive, as well as pretty, but entirely unyielding to the needs of her family - Sue has not had a full night's sleep in three years.

Our daughter Anne, always strong willed and independent, after going through the stages of sweetness of early childhood and hostility of adolescence, has matured now into a wonderful woman, intelligent, intuitive, feeling and caring. A very determined person with an idealistic view of the world, she is a nature lover, concerned with issues of our planet and its inhabitants.

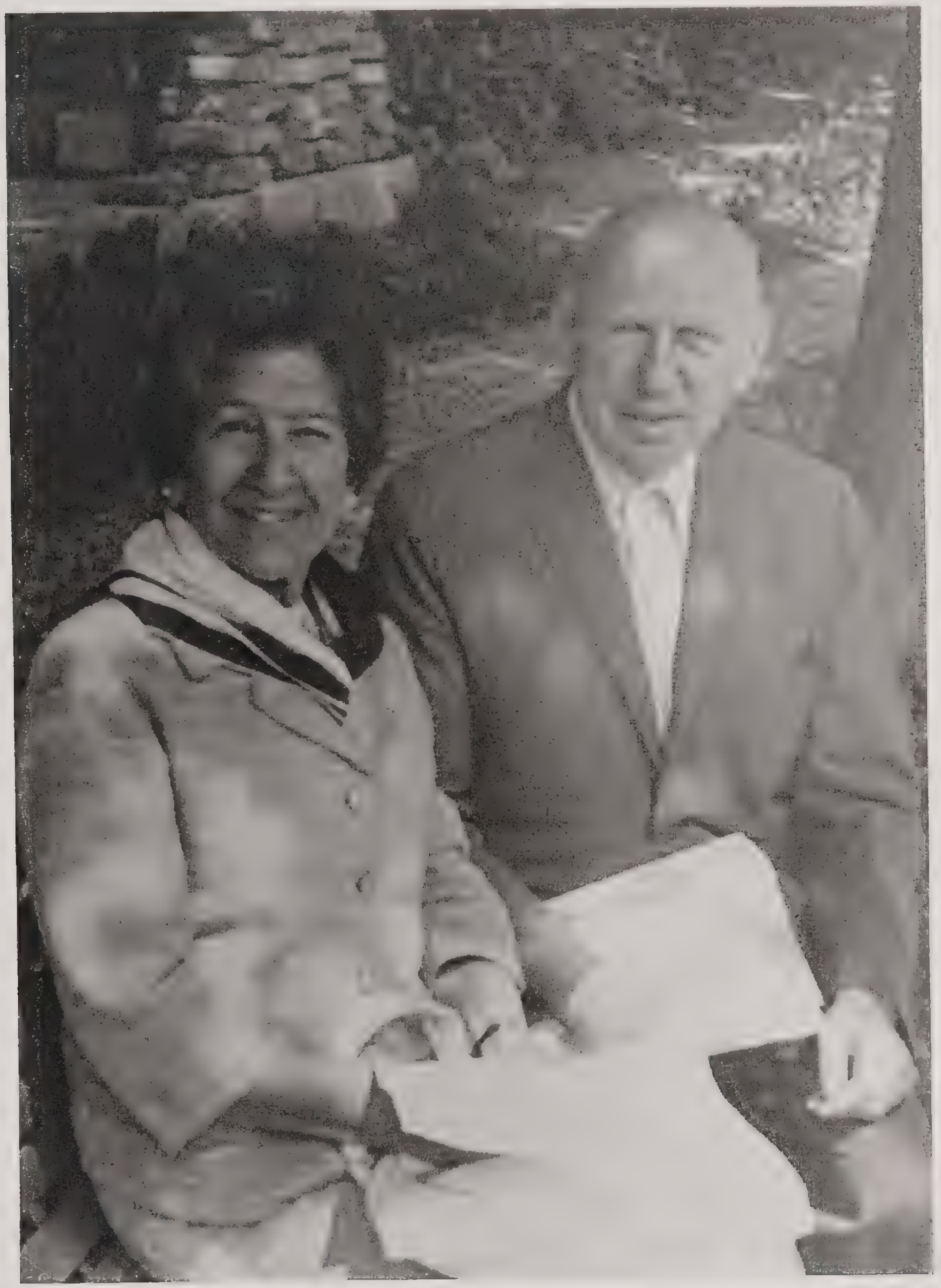
She persevered on a long and tough road towards becoming a veterinarian at Ross University in St. Kitts, a Caribbean island far away from home. After taking the National Boards, she succeeded in becoming licensed in the states of Ohio, Florida, Oklahoma and finally California. It has been a long and tedious road of endless exam-taking to obtain these licenses.

She is now equipped with the means for helping the animal world.

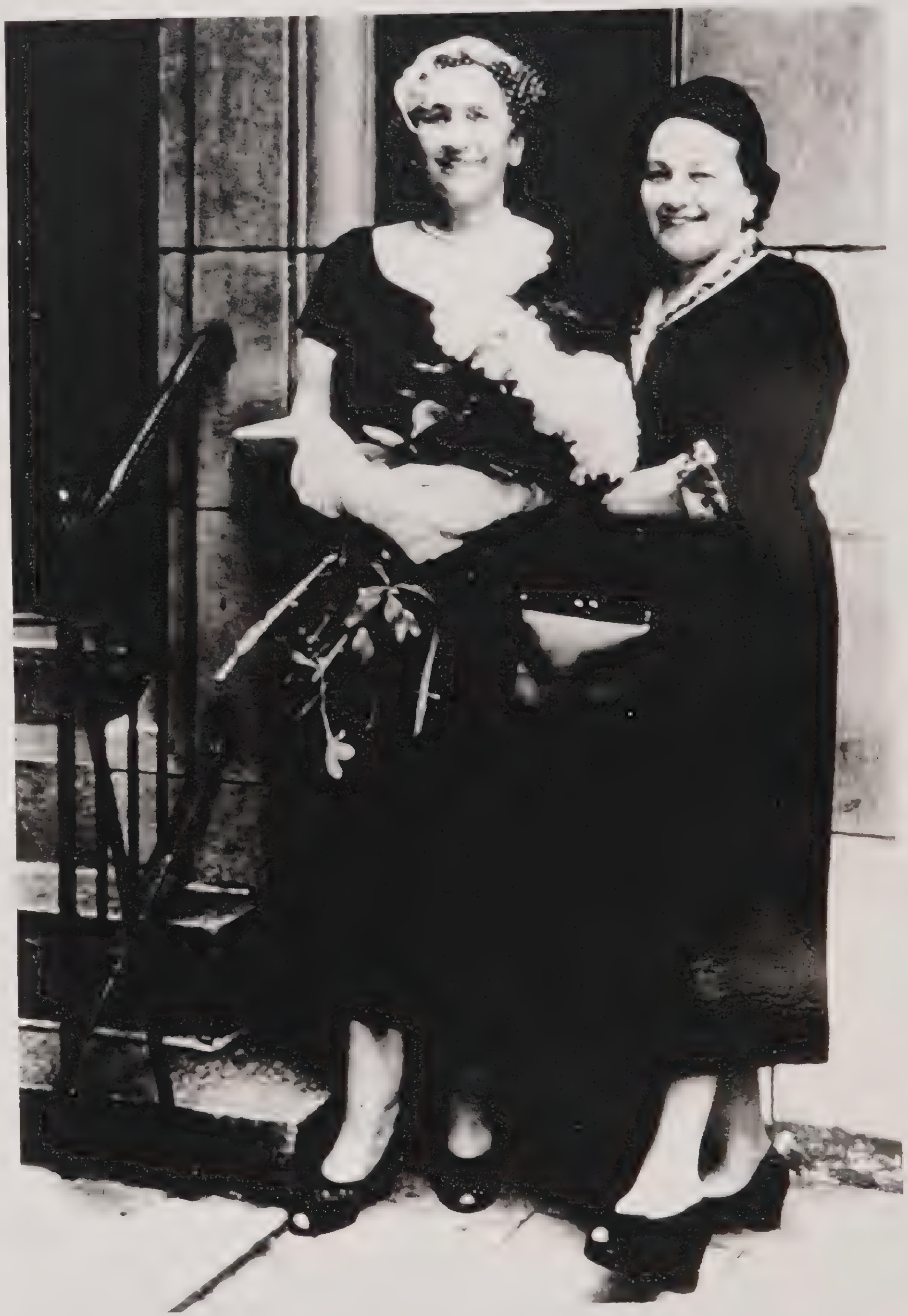
Full of imagination and spirit, she is sure to get involved in societal, environmental and general humanitarian issues.

With her strong convictions and ability to write, it wouldn't even surprise us if she became a writer.

We hope to be around for a long while, and witness our childrens' and grandchildrens' evolution and growth.



Ida & Samuel Esterowicz, circa 1968



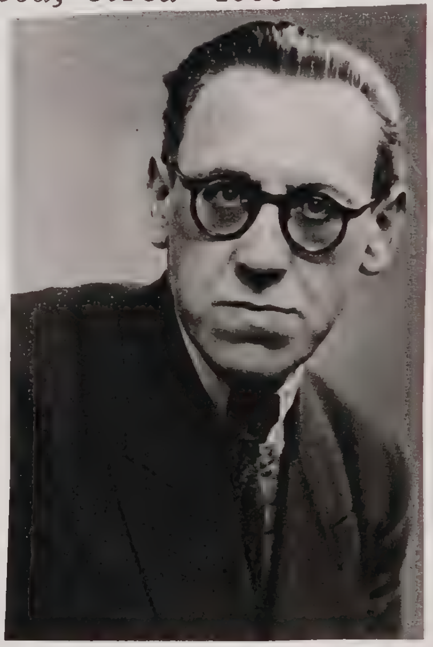
Ida Esterowicz, Genia Zeldowicz June 7th, 1953
Perella's & Vova's wedding

Mike, Anne Good, circa 1957

Lenny Good, circa 1954

Mike Good, circa 1958

Anne, Lenny, Mike Good, circa 1965



David Esterowicz, circa

Lenny Good, Danny Sedlis, circa 1963

Ida Esterowicz, circa

Anne, Pearl, Lenny, Bill & Mike Good, circa 1961

Lenny, Bill, Pearl, Anne, Mike Good, circa 1965

Lenny Good, Mike Good- the groom, the bride Susan Possidente, Anne Good.

APPENDIX

THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM IN THE USA
by Samuel Esterowicz

Since the end of Warld War II "Marx-doomed" capitalism has delivered convincing proof of its viability and also improved its moral image:

1) The governments of many capitalistic countries, abandoning the policy of noninterference, succeeded, through monetary and fiscal policies, together with social legislation that works as stabilizer, in shortening and mitigating the business cycle - the most objectionable feature of capitalism;

2) Refuting the Marxist "misery theory", which asserts that in a capitalistic society the worker can expect only steadily increasing impoverishment, the standard of living of the worker in the capitalistic countries has risen to an unprecedented high level;

3) Impoverished West Germany, though destroyed by war and devoid of raw materials, managed by adhering strictly to the principles of capitalism to perform an "economic miracle" i.e. succeeded in reconstructing her cities and industries, absorbing 15 millions of refugees from the East and paying out tens of billions of dollars of indemnity to the victims of the Nazi regime and becoming the most powerful economy in Western Europe, with one of the highest rates of per capita income in the world. Approximately the same can be said of Japan.

4) The Berlin "Wall" speaks unequivocally about the superiority of the capitlistic way of life and the productivity of its economy over that of socialism.

All these facts clearly indicate the viability of the capitalistic economy. In addition the history of the recent events also disproves a whole range of derogatory allegations about capitalism:

1) Capitalism does not preclude a just distribution of the national product - consider Sweden, and communism does not ensure its realization - consider the USSR.

2) The allegation, (supported by the 19th century rush of the industrialized European countries to create colonial empires), that unavoidably overproduction in the anarchistic capitalistic system makes aggressive warfare to secure new markets inevitable, was refuted by the Marshall plan of the capitalistic USA. Through what Churchill called "this most unsordid act" America strove to create new markets for its idling industries not through conquest (which, through its monopoly over the atom bomb it could easily have accomplished) but through raising the purchasing power of the neighboring world.

3) Finally the fact that we find in the capitalistic states such as Germany and Japan the highest levels of prosperity even though they are forbidden to engage in the production of weapons, categorically disproves the allegation that a capitalistic economy cannot exist without the continuous production of arms.

It is therefore a paradox that, after its many spectacular achievements, the capitalism in the USA faces many grave problems that threaten its existance, at the time of the advancing twilight of the Marxist doctrine.

Our government defined the priorities in our economy in 1946. The Full Employment Act places the latter ahead of the stability of our currency; since we are unable to have both at the same time, we witness a permanent process of inflation which accelerated after 1967.

The negative consequences of the inflation (as long as it was moderate) were more than compensated for by the fact that, by keeping the wheels of industry rolling in a cyclical economy, inflation contributed in real terms to the constant growth of the national product and the rise of the standard of living of the population.

The situation is aggravated immensly, however, when the no more tolerable accelerated inflation, itself difficult to resolve, is coupled with a problem which imperils the principles on which capitalism is based.

As we know, capitalism is a system based on private initiative, in which the adequate return acts as the incentive indispensable in all economic systems.

Under these circumstances the nature of the capitalistic system requires that the return, (the profit in relation to the invested capital) should reflect, in addition to the prevailing interest rate for the invested capital, also a reward for the initiative and compensation for the always present risk.
As we turn to the statistics, however, we discover a disturbing distortion in the scale of the rates.
From the Sunday (August 5th) edition of Los Angeles Times we see that, in contradiction to the principle that risk has to be rewarded, the yield of USA Treasury 91 day bills is 9.154%, but the average yield on the Standard and Poor industrials is only 5.22%.
The last indicates indirectly that the return on the capital invested in the USA industries is also low.
This circumstance is substantited by the fact that, even though the dollar has lost half of its value since 1967, the Dow Jones index of the 30 industrials has lost about 100 points since that time.
The isufficient earnings of the American industries do not inspire the desire to share the changeable fortunes of industry, thus making impossible to finance, through the issuance of shares, the justified, job-creating expansions.
The disappointing earnings triggers also another chain of negative effects:
1) it suppresses private initiative - one of the foundations of our economy;
2) it limits the ability of our industry to provide adequate funds for research and indispensable modernization of the plants; this, in turn, causing a lagging, lately a falling, productivity, decreases the ability of our industry to meet the competition from abroad; this, through a deficit in our trade, contributes to the devaluation of the dollar.

Looking for the roots of today's unenviable position of our economy, we have to turn to the post-war period.
At that time the USA, possessing the only untouched by war, intact large industry, was leading in research and consequently in the application of advanced technology and indisputably dominated the world's markets.

During the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, the US paper dollar became the key currency of the newly created international payment system, and its rate of exchange in other currencies was fixed for many years to come.
This was a time when US organized labor easily obtained substantial raises of the workers wages. The producers, not meeting any competition from abroad, shifted higher costs onto the consumer, triggering an upward spiral for prices and wages while also raising the prices of exported goods.

Although favorable for US industries, this did not last long.
During the second half of the fifties this conjuncture began to rapidly deteriorate as the industries in Western Europe and Japan, which had been destroyed by the war, began to be replaced with technologically more modern plants. This was done with some aid from the USA. Lacking superior technology, and having much higher labor costs, in a short period of time the US industries were not only eliminated from the foreign markets, but also in many cases were unable to resist at home the competition from abroad. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the permanent loss of purchase power was not reflected in the exchange rates of the dollar in foreign currencies, which the Bretton Woods agreement obliged the USA to keep stable. This created an overvaluation of the dollar (meaning a higher purchase power of the dollar abroad), which resulted in a stream of goods from Western Europe and Japan to the USA. Simultaneously American tourists went abroad obtaining services and recreation for much less money than at home. Consequently in Western Europe and Japan we witness, since the late fifties and into the sixties, flourishing economies, fast growing industries, acute labor shortages, rising standards of living, and surpluses in the balances of Trade and Payments. In the USA, on the other hand, we are finding a stagnant economy with substantial unemployment, unutilized capacity in industry, low profits, a lagging process of modernization, and deficits in the balance of Trade and Payments. An attempt to rescue the dollar has resulted in the spending of half of the treasury goldstock (10 billion).

After 1971 the US economy improved when its government freed the exchange rate of the dollar from the chains of the Bretton Woods agreement. Gradually, through two devaluations and by allowing the exchange rates to fluctuate, purchase power of the dollar was equalized at home and abroad.

This eliminated only one of the problems that trouble our economy. The second, and no less important problem, was the continuously increasing high wages of the American worker. This remains, as of today, unresolved. The enlightened capital of our time recognizes that it is in its own vital interest to provide the worker with adequate wages and sufficient purchase power, in order to enable him to buy what he produces. This contradicts the Marxist theory of irreconcileable class antagonism between capital and labor. While success of the entrepreneur depends on the well being of the worker, the opposite is also true. The working class does not yet recognize that it is in its long range vital interest that the employer make sufficient profit. This justifies modernization and job creating investments made by the employer, which can also be beneficial to the worker.

Abusing their tremendous economic power and taking advantage of their ability to strangle the economy through striking, the organized Labor Unions have pressed in the last decades for excessive high wages and benefits. This appears to have been done regardless of market conditions and achieved productivity. Usually the raise in cost of labor pushes the price of goods upwards if it is not neutralized by an increase in productivity.

The monetary and budget policies of the government work with the fluctuations of prices based on excess production or a lagging demand. These anticyclic policies are not functional in cases when the rise of a price is caused by an increased cost of production. In such cases a deflationary policy, according to my experiences, produces the phenomenon of "stagflation". This means that by not bringing the rising prices down, stagnation of the economy results. Ironically, the unionized worker escapes the negative consequences of inflation (which, by and large, are brought about through his own contriving) because he is protected by the "cost of living" clause in labor contracts. The competition from abroad, where there are substantially lower labor costs, and the increasing cost of labor here, in combination with government regulations decreases profits for American industry. Thus accumulation of capital is diminished and what suffers in consequence is research, expansion, and modernization of facilities.

Our so called "labor intensive" industries are entering business lines where the profit depends less on labor costs. This is being done instead of expansion or modernization. The fact that Standard Oil of Indiana bought Montgomary Ward and National Steel Corp. is looking to buy a Savings and Loan Association speaks for itself. The Unions have carried out many objectionable policies which have contributed to inflation: the lagging expansion of industries, lack of capital and a resulting unemployment, low competition, deficits in our Balance of Trade, and, most disturbing, a falling productivity in our economy.

In many cases, we in the US are unwilling to free ourselves from the past nd are continuing to live in a world of fictions. In the field of justice, for instance, we still refuse to stop living in fear of the arbitrary court, which our first immigrants left behind in Europe. We are still trying hard to protect the "good" citizen from the ruthless law proceedings of the state machine. This is ignoring present reality - an entirely different situation - i.e. the presence of a Bill of Rights, a court of Jurors etc. Through new rules and interpretations of the old, we have almost paralyzed the "Hand of Justice", resulting in a " land of the free " wherein the inhabitants are deprived of a basic freedom, particularly in the metropolitan areas - freedom from fear.

In our economy, we persistantly remain in the past epoch of the Rockefellers and the Goulds. We ignore the fact that at present our enterprises belong to millions of shareholders who make up the foundations of the universities and pension funds of the workers. Still we continue to equate the capitalist with the hated "Robber Barons" of the 19th century. Consequently the struggle against the capitalist is a very popular one and the excessive demands of the Unions is finding unmerited support. On the contrary, a recently proposed price increase to be made by the industries was opposed by the government, even when it was long overdue. The applauded victory of President John F. Kennedy over U.S. Steel in 1962, which thwarted the innovative cost cutting processes in the making of steel, stagnated and delayed an urgent modernization of the steel industry. It took our steel industries 25 years to replace the obsolete open hearth furnaces for the modern basic oxygen furnaces. The US is still far behind the Japenese in the cost cutting process of this industry. The Japenese have cut expenses by 46%, the US by 16%. Although steel is a very important industry for the US economy, the shares of the steel companies in many cases are sold on the stock exchange for values only one third of their book value. It seems paradoxical that the

US, world leader and promoter of capitalism, follows at home anti-capitalistic policies which are undermining its own principles. This situation is aggravated by the fact that our politicians, with their eye on the next election, try hard not to antagonize the majority. They do not underestimate the importance of labor as voters. These voters are also t.v. watchers - commercialism and rating oriented media likewise cater to voters.

Facing grave consequences of dwindling natural resources, our politicians, following the policy of appeasment, hesitate to admit that:

1) per capita we are consuming twice as much energy as the Western European who has not less per capita income;

2) since the developement of new sources of energy are long range remedies, only a cut of our consumption can give us the urgently needed price relief and decrease our dependence on Persian Gulf oil.

Probably for the same reasons our government did not address the real issues- the constant rise of our historically excessive high wages. This is done in the face of lagging investment, falling productivity, accelerated inflation, unemployment and a deficit in our balance of trade. These high wages have not been justified by an increase in productivity. Our government does not emphasize the interdependence between capital and labor.

An economy with underaccumulation and overconsumption can hardly survive, just like an economy with overaccumulation and underconsumption.

Instead the government prefers to declare that the latest increases in oil prices by the OPEC are the cause of our troubles. It is not explained, however, how the Germans and the Japanese, though they import 100% of their oil requirements (as compared to our 50%) manage to have less inflation and unemployment as well as a surplus in their foreign trade. The government also did not tell the people that in constant dollars the price of OPEC oil has remained stable since the end of 1973. Countries with more stable currencies, like Switzerland and West Germany, are paying today for a barrel of oil nearly the same amount of francs and marks, respectively, as they did back in 1973. Recent statistics show us that West Germany has more per capita income than does the US. This is alarming in light of the fact that West Germany was destroyed by the war, is devoid of oil and raw materials and burdened with refugees and indemnity problems, while the US was spared by the war and richly endowed with oil and raw materials.

These figures are cause for pessimism, since they confirm that we are on an incorrect and dangerous economic path.

An important unanswered question remains: how can we, as a democracy, change our present course?

January 23, 1979

Letter to the Editor
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA 90053

Regarding the Strategic Arms Limitation, SALT II, as with any other problem, there is no substitute for common sense.

Insofar as the two superpowers are concerned, the danger of a nuclear confrontation has for all practical purposes been eliminated. Since at present neither the USA nor the Soviet Union is able to block the retaliation of the other, both Washington and Moscow realize that, whatever the objective may be, it would not justify nuclear warfare.

This realization was confirmed by recent events:
When the USSR suppressed the Hungarian uprising in 1956, erected the wall in Berlin in 1961 and raped Czechoslovakia in i968, the USA preferred in each case to accept humiliation rather than use atomic weapons to challenge the superiority of the Soviet Union on the European continent.

For its part neither did the USSR use its nuclear weapons to challenge the United States superiority in conventional arms during the confrontation over Cuba in 1962 or the crises in the eastern Mediterranean in 1967 and 1973.
Moscow preferred the humiliation of retreat in the first case and in the other two accepted the ruin of its plan to strangle the Free World through the seizure of the oil fields in the Middle East.

Just as in the pre-atomic era, the outcome of these confrontations was determined by the superiority in conventional arms. What we now call the "Balance of Terror" has served as an reliable deterrent against the danger of a nuclear holocaust.

With the expiration of SALT I, the decisive question we face at present is: would a large unilateral increase of the Soviet Union's offensive nuclear capability upset this balance? The answer is clearly negative.
Regardless how massive the first strike might be, the USSR could not hit our mobile units and thus prevent its own destruction by our "launchers from the skies and from the bottom of the seas"

Since the problem of adequate nuclear defensive arms was resolved by SALT I no increase in offensive nuclear capability, no matter how huge, would shield the attacking Soviet Union from having to pay the same prohibitive price which it was unwilling to pay in the past.

Under these circumstances, if the Soviet leaders are dumb enough to divert more of their already strained resources to enlarge their offensive nuclear capability, why not let them do so?

I hope that we will be wise enough not to keep up with them, but prefer to use our resources to improve the quality of life of people here and abroad.

As the sruggle between a world where the ideas are for people and a world where people's lives are used for the triumph of ideas (regardless of the labels attached to this), let us be wise enough to distinguish what is important from what is decisive.

Samuel Esterowicz

1366 Lafayette Rd
Claremont, CA 91711

Father never heard from the L.A. Times. His letter was never printed, neither was its receipt acknowledged by the L.A.Times, the N.Y.Times, nor by Senator Henry Jackson to whom Father sent a copy, care of the Armed Services Committee.

Father sent his letter to President Richard Nixon in San Clemente, introducing himself as a faithful admirer of the president's foreign policy. Father explained that he had started his political education on the streets of Petrograd prior to 1917 where, as a student at the Imperial University, he was then active during the first (democratic) stage of the Russian Revolution. Father admitted that his conclusions about SALT II differed from those reached by the government and by the majority of political reviewers, but he considered a many-sided elucidation of this vital issue to be in the best public interest.

President Nixon response to the letter, of March 6th, 1979, (overleaf), brought Father great satisfaction. It also ecouraged him to write Nixon another, to my mind much too supportive, letter. In it Father uses "quotation marks" with the word "liberal" to express his indignation that the name of this noble persuasion (Father had always thought himself a liberal before) should be usurped by those entirely unworthy of it. The word liberal was used as a pejorative by conservatives a few years later.

This letter was not acknowledged however, not surprisingly, considering Father's mention of "Nixon ordering the operation of the plumbers".

RICHARD NIXON

LA CASA PACIFICA
SAN CLEMENTE, CALIFORNIA

March 6, 1979

Dear Mr. Esterowicz

I found your letter of January 31 most interesting and perceptive.

You speak from deep experience which few have had.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon

Mr. Samuel Esterowicz
1366 Lafayette Road
Claremont, California 91711

April 4, 1979

Mr Richard Nixon
La Casa Pacifica
San Clemente, California 92672

Dear Mr. President;

Your kind letter of March 6th encourages me to write to you again, this time regarding recent events in which you, Mr. President, were involved.
Learning from experience, I differ in my evaluation of these events from the one currently prevailing in the United States.

I was an eyewitness, Mr. President, when in the autumn of 1917 the bolsheviks, the mortal enemies of democracy, took advantage of democratic principles to seize power and destroy democracy in Russia for ever. The bolsheviks exploited the blind adherence of the government of Alexander Kerensky to the noble maxim: "Pereat mundus fiat justicia - let the world perish, but the law must be kept".

The fact that Kerensky was not willing to transgress the principles of democracy in order to save it brought disaster to Russia - the horrors of the civil war, collectivization, the purges and coercion lasting until now;
In addition, since it was Lenin who created Hitler, the blunder of Kerensky brought oceans of blood and tears all over the world.

The truth is, Hitler came to power not only on the waves of German thirst for revenge. In conditions of a world depression, of millions of unemployed and a huge communist party in Germany, Hitler was given decisive support as a dam against bolshevism by the "Thissens", the "Krupps" and even by the Jewish bankers.

Chamberlain and the circle of Lady Astor in England and the Lavals and Gamelins in France were not inspired by the wish to restore the international position of the defeated Germany but by the "Red Danger", when they allowed Hitler to free Germany from the chains of Versailles and build a powerful army; this precipitated events which brought the world Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

You, Mr President, took over the presidency of the United States at a time of great turmoil.
The so-called "liberals" did not profit from the lessons of the "thirties".
At that time the pacifists and liberals of the Western Democracies, in alliance with the fascists, contributed to the first big triumphs of Hitler by urging mothers not to send their sons to die for Prague. As we know, the western European mothers had to pay much more dearly subsequently, when the destinies of Paris, London and even of the world were involved.

In spite of the lessons of the "thirties", the American "liberals" ignored the worldwide scope of communism and the global aspect of our resistance to the communist expansion in Southeast Asia.

The "liberals", in alliance with the communists, declared that the war in Vietnam was immoral and thus inspired a lawbreaking disobediance and violence - this submerged our country in turmoil still fresh in our memories.

In addition, the "liberals" did their best to distort the goals of the U.S. foreign policy and damage our image abroad by publishing stolen secret documents.

The United States had twice in this century freed the world from oppression and in 1945, though possessing the monopoly of the atomic bomb, brought the world not subjugation but help and relief. Nevertheless, our fight for freedom was now presented to the world as an act of naked aggression.

Evaluating these events, the question arises: should you have, as the President, have repeated the fatal for mankind blunder of Kerensky and placed the strict compliance with the law above the vital interests of our country?

Should you have allowed the apostles of lawlessness to continue their destructive work undisturbed, under the protection of the Constitution whose freedoms were, through interpretation, often carried to a harmful extreme?

In your letter, Mr President, you kindly mentioned my "deep experience".
The latter tells me that, (though condemned by the majority), by ordering the operation of the "plumbers", you executed your duties as the President at their best. I am convinced that, after the regrettable delay, the majority of our people will come to this conclusion, and so will the objective historians.

Sincerely yours

Samuel Esterowicz
1366 Lafayette Road
Claremont, California 91711

CRITIQUE OF THE ANTIINFLATION
paper submitted by Father to the
University Club of Claremont

The point of gravity of our preoccupations shifted lately from the outside to the inside of our country. The grave situation of our economy alarms us.
Even more alarming, however, is the fact that the remedy which we are applying, aggravates instead of helping the situation - the inflation is accelerating and the productivity of our economy is falling.
Analyzing the possible causes of our most visible problem, inflation:

1. the inbalance between the supply and demand of goods;
2. our budget deficit;
3. the rising costs of production;

At present the average utilization of the production capacity of our industry is about 80% and 6% of our work force is idle. These facts indicate clearly that, even though some sectors of our economy may be "overheated", the imbalance between supply and demand of goods is not the main cause of our inflation which lately is getting out of hand and, by creating an "inflation psychosis", is feeding upon itself.

Considering the degree of utilization of our productive capacity, high unemployment and our G.N.P. amounting to trillions, we are entitled to conclude that our budget deficit in the amount of 20-30 billions, although it creates additional demand, is not the main problem by far.

On the other hand a range of facts point at rising costs, partially beyond our control, as the the main culprit of our inflation; surprisingly, among the contributors to rising costs we find the deflationary policies of our Federal Reserve.
In raising the whole scale of interest rates, the Federal Reserve ignores the following facts:
1. The financing in all phases of production and distribution of goods represents a cost ingredient, and an increase of this cost pushes the prices upward.
Higher prices of goods together with an increased mortgage interest rate result in a higher Consumer Price Index, which in its turn raises wages, thus contributing to the start of a wage - price spiral.

2. By discouraging investment in a non selective way, higher interest rates discourage the modernization of our plants, a precondition for the growth of our productivity, badly needed to neutralize the continuously escalating wages.

3. The strengthening of the foreign exchange rate of our currency, engendered by a higher interest rate here at home, does not lower the cost of production (as it used to occasion in Germany), since the fuel and raw materials imported by us are priced in U.S. dollars.
On th eother hand, a strong dollar decreases the competitivenesss of our industry at home and abroad, resulting, in addition to the deterioration of our trade balance, in lower capital formation, a higher unemployment expense and, consequently, in a larger budget deficit.

4. The deflationary monetary policies of our government, which would have worked, more or less, if the rise in prices was caused by excessive demand, are not working (as confirmed by the last miserable results), when the rise in prices is caused by an increased cost.

In such cases a deflationary policy of the Federal Reserve produces the phenomenon of "Stagflation" - without bringing down the inflated prices, it creates and deepens the stagnation of our economy; this, in its turn, by cutting the government revenues and increasing immensely the cost of the National Debt service as well as the unemployment expense, substantially enlarges our budget deficit.

In summation it should be pointed out that by greatly raising the interest rate, the Federal Reserve (in addition to the fact that by halving the bond prices it has ruined millions of investors), is also enlarging our budget deficit and contributing to the start of a wage-price spiral through increases of the cost of goods and the cost of living - thus achieving results which are entirely inconsistant with its deflationary goals.

Samuel Esterowicz
1366 Lafayette Rd
Claremont, CA 91711

April 11th, 1980

Prof. Gordon K. Douglas
Pomona College
Claremont, CA 91711

Dear Prof. Gordon;

I refer here to your comments about my paper in your letter to prof. John Vieg of March 24th, 1980.
I agree with you entirely - the high interest policies of the Federal Reserve are certainly not the cause of our inflation.
As a matter of fact we had inflation before the Federal Reserve initiated its policies.
I would like to emphasize, however, that in my previous paper I limited my deliberations to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the high interest policies of the Federal Reserve as a measure for curbing inflation; I would very much appreciate your opinion as to my conclusions.
At this opportunity I would like to add that in the shaping of its policies the government ignores the fact that the income of the majority of our population is tied to the Consumer Price Index, which reflects the fluctuations of the prices of goods and services.
Under these circumstances the efforts of our government to mitigate the energy problem and curb inflation through cost-raising monetary policies and by imposing taxes on gasoline are counterproductive, since the desirable effects are neutralized by the increase in the C.P.I. and, consequently, of the income and purchase power of the population.
On the other hand, measures such as the rationing of gasoline and credit restricions would be far more effective in achieving the desired goals.

Turning to the causes of our inflation, I am in complete agreement with you - its causes are cmplex.
Considering the large size of our National Product, however, I see the prime cause of our inflation not in the budgetary policies of our government, but primarily in the rising costs of the production and distribution of our goods.
These costs, even though they are only partially beyond our control, are not addressed by our government - for purely political reasons, I assume.

The solution of our economic problems, including inflation, could be sought predominantly in the increase of productivity of our economy; this has been falling lately as a consequence of the inability of our industry to raise adequate funds for research and modernization of our plants.
The profitability of our industry and its capital formation ability is relatively low, since it is impinged upon by two factors:

1. The doctrine of "free trade" implemented by our foreign policy;
2. Our historically excessive high wages, at present not justified by higher productivity based on a superior technology.

It should be stressed here in this context that in the industrial sector of our economy an unrestricted competition is considered an unalienable element of our market mechanism which, through price fluctuations, provides our capitalistic system, among other, with the important for its survival ability for self-adjustment.
Thus, to insure the uninhibited functioning of competition, special laws were promulgated (Sherman & Clayton Antitrust Acts).
However this policy is not applied to the Labor Market. There the elimination of competition is even supported through special laws (Union Shop and Minimum Wage).
Having provided the Labor Unions with such formidable economic power, with the ability to strangle our economy, we could pose the following legitimate questions: do the Unions abuse their tremendous powers, to achieve excessive benfits for themselves, with harm for the majority?
Does their constant push for higher wages (not neutralized by higher productivity), unheeding of the market conditions, represent the prime cause of our unabating inflation and of the lagging modernization of our plants?

In my opinion the following facts provide us with a clear answer.
At present we are witnessing a severe crisis in our automobile industry; many plants remain closed, idling more than 200,000 workers.
The government had to intervene to keep Chrysler going, Ford is losing millions of dollars in its North American operations. The situation is aggravated by the fact that, in a market with a rapidly falling demand, our industry has to compete with the Japanese, who operate with a labor cost of about $9.0 per hour, while in our industry the same amounted until recently to about $15.0 per hour.
Nevertheless, this grave situation did not deterr the Union from insisting on a new contract which raises the cost of labor (which the Japanese characterize as a sloppy one), gradually to $20.0 per hour.
As we know, cheerless conditions are also prevailing in our steel industry; the market prices of the steel corporation's shares are in many cases reduced to a small fraction of their book value.
As a consequence of its low profitability, the steel industry is still unable to replace all of their obsolete open hearths with the cost-cutting Basic Oxygen Furnaces, introduced in Austria as early as 25 years ago. This in its turn resulted in the closing of a range of moneyloosing plants, idling tens of thousands of steelworkers.
Under these circumstances the steel corporations were compelled to look for salvation in diversification (U.S.Steel, Bethlehem, Armco), and mergers (Jones & Laughlin, Youngstown Sheet).
At the same time, however, we learn from the latest yearly report (page 13) of Bethlehem Steel, that the average wages of steelworkers had almost tripled during the last decade - from below $6.00 to over 16.00 per hour.
In other words, at the time when Youngstown bacame a ghost town, the steelworker not only recovered the loss of the purchase power of the dollar, he also incresed his wages in real terms by 50%.
The latest increases in car and steel prices demonstrate that a continual increase of wages (not neutralized by an increase of productivity), results in a permanent inflation, which no deflationary monetary policy will curb.
The above-mentioned facts are also indicating that our Unions are going in the footsteps of their British colleagues, who with their shortsighted policies pushed Great Britain from the first to the last place in per capita G.N.P. among the industrialized countries of Europe.
Already our slide downhill is also impessive: consider that we, rich in oil and raw materials, unscathed by war, have today a lower per capita income than West Germany, who is devoid of oil and raw materials, was destroyed by war, and is burdened by the problem of 15 million refugees from the East and by indemnification payments to the Nazi Victims.

In addition, a much more disturbing fact appeared recently on our horizons.
The viability and success of our capitalist system is indissolubly tied to the private initiative (which must be rewarded), and the always involved risk compensated, if the system is to function.
When we turn to statistics we learn, however, that recently this was not the case in our economy.
According to the April 6th Sunday Edition of the L.A. Times, the interest on the 182 day Treasury Bill amounts to 14.804%, whereas the average yield of the Standard & Poor 500 Industrials, to only 6.06%
Undoubtedly, the last figure reflects the very low return on the capital invested in our industry. It also points out the absence of any incentive for sharing the changeable fortunes of our industry.
The distorted scale of interest of our economy represents in the short range a lagging economic activity and productivity, as a consequence of an inadequate influx of capital.
In the long range it represents a mortal threat to our capitalistic system, since, like an economy encumbered by overaccumulation and underconsumption, an economy which underaccumulates and overconsumes can hardly survive either.

Respectfully

(Samuel Esterowicz)

Copy: Prof. John Vieg